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TELLING THE SOVIET REDEMPTION STORY: RONALD REAGAN'S CHANGING SOVIET RHETORIC

BY

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DISSERTATION

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Abstract

This dissertation examines Ronald Reagan's changing Soviet rhetoric over the course of his presidency. Specifically, I argue that through the rhetorical analysis of eight of Reagan's speeches, four from his first term and four from his second, we see how the President told a story of Soviet redemption. The first chapter of this extended rhetorical analysis is a justification of my claim, or a discussion of why Reagan's Soviet rhetoric matters. The chapter also stands as a Cold War literature review that reveals how America understood itself as the world's guardian against communist encroachment. The second chapter is concerned with Reagan's pre-presidential Soviet rhetoric from his position as the Screen Actors Guild president through his failed presidential campaign run in 1976, and it establishes the decades-long pattern of anti-communist vitriol that Reagan brought to the White House. The third chapter is a rhetorical study of the Reagan's concretized Soviet rhetoric that focuses on his use of historical narrative, characterizing the Soviet Union's leaders as immoral and abhorrent, and the rhetoric of the Soviet Union's inevitable fall. The fourth chapter examines how Reagan negotiated the shift from his antecedent Soviet rhetoric to a more conciliatory Soviet rhetoric, effectively recasting the USSR as a flawed but possibly redemptive character. The final chapter specifically looks at how Reagan's Soviet redemption narrative emerged from his eight years as President of the United States and how that narrative might better help us understand Reagan as an orator.

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Chapter One

For nearly fifty years after World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union engaged in a "Cold War"—a battle of words and proxy wars and sociopolitical conflict. Immediately following World War II, the world witnessed a historic shift in global power as the United States and the Soviet Union expanded their political, military, and ideological might. The United States did not return to its previous position as an isolationist state. The Soviet Union took steps to protect itself from the kind of military aggression it experienced from neighboring countries in World War I and World War II. The post-war actions of the United States and the Soviet Union led to polarized relations and enmity between the two superpowers. Where once US-Soviet relations were "a problem of rarely more than peripheral concern for the two countries involved," it soon "became an object of rapt attention and anxiety for the entire world."[1] A mixture of mutual distrust, an arms race, and vitriolic rhetoric comprised the foundation for the Cold War during the years between 1945 and 1985. Political tension was high, and relations between the United States and the Soviet Union seemed destined always to be poised on the brink of collapse. Yet 1991 saw US-Soviet relations as friendly as they had been since World War II, and December of that same year saw the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and with that, the end of the Cold War.

What structural factors had changed during the intervening years to bring about such a dramatic alteration in not only US-Soviet relations but Soviet-led communism? The ascension of Mikhail Gorbachev to Soviet General Secretary in 1985, and the subsequent change in President Ronald Reagan's political rhetoric and actions, were key factors in the Cold War shift. Together, Reagan and Gorbachev pulled US-Soviet relations out of the Cold War mire onto

[1] John Lewis Gaddis, *Russia, the Soviet Union, and the United States: An Interpretive History*, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1990), 175.

firmer political soil. Gorbachev led the way in ending the Cold War, while Reagan encouraged and facilitated Gorbachev's political agenda.[2] Reagan accomplished this in large part through his political oratory, a "prolonged rhetorical campaign in which [he] attempted to alter the language, the ideas, and the thought process used in American discussions about the Soviet Union."[3]

Throughout his presidency, Reagan maintained his belief that Soviet and American social and political ideologies were fundamentally and irrevocably antithetical, and that the Cold War was a war of ideas. Still, Reagan desired dialogue with the Soviet Union, but his first presidential term saw the deaths of three Soviet leaders.[4] As a result, Reagan never had a single Soviet leader with whom he could engage in extended communication. At times, however, it seemed Reagan did not desire such communication, because his Soviet rhetoric was often terse, vitriolic, and provocative. Indeed, Reagan maintained some measure of anti-Soviet rhetoric throughout his presidency, although his second-term Soviet rhetoric changed relatively quickly, and he publically displayed greater optimism for the future of US-Soviet relations. He became more optimistic, in great part, because he saw Gorbachev as a different kind of Soviet leader from his communist predecessors.[5]

Reagan was initially wary of Gorbachev, for though the new Soviet leader was relatively affable and energetic—the opposite of his three predecessors—, Gorbachev would have to have been a "confirmed ideologue" for the Politburo to choose him.[6] The President began

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[2] James Mann, *The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan* (New York: Viking, 2009), 346.
[3] Ibid., 28.
[4] Leonid Brezhnev in 1982, Yuri Andropov in 1984 and Konstantin Chernenko in 1985.
[5] Ronald Reagan, "Farewell Address to the Nation," (speech, Washington, DC, January 11, 1989), *The American Presidency Project*, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29650&st=&st1=40.
[6] Ronald Reagan, *An American Life: The Autobiography of Ronald Reagan* (New York: Threshold Editions, 1990), 615.

communicating with Gorbachev via a series of letters.[7] In those letters, Reagan invited Gorbachev to a summit in Washington. Gorbachev declined to meet Reagan in Washington, but both leaders agreed to meet in Geneva, a neutral site. It is with Reagan's November 21, 1985 "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress Following the Soviet-United States Summit Meeting in Geneva" ("Geneva Address") that we first see a shift in Reagan's Soviet rhetoric.

It is Reagan's changing Soviet rhetoric that will be the focus of this dissertation. I examine the ways that Reagan negotiated the shift from a vehemently anti-communist discourse that held little hope for a meaningful or friendly relationship between the US and the Soviet Union to a rhetoric of guarded optimism about the future of US-Soviet relations that ultimately revealed a Soviet redemption narrative. Critics and pundits have long emphasized the enduring consistency of Reagan's rhetoric, the ways in which Reagan would reiterate the same values and messages in speech after speech. Reagan's decades-long Soviet rhetoric emphasized the moral, political, and social differences between the US and Soviet systems. Such disparate systems, Reagan seemed to say, meant that the US and the Soviet Union could hope for nothing more than a tense coexistence. I am interested in how Reagan altered his Soviet rhetoric, and in doing so, created a narrative in which the once irredeemable Soviet Union was redeemed.

How narrative functioned as a mode of persuasion and historical restructuring in Reagan's Soviet discourse is critical to this dissertation. I shall argue that eight speeches, in particular, exemplify Reagan's Cold War argument, and that taken as a whole demonstrate a tale of Soviet redemption. That is, what emerges over the course of Reagan's two presidential terms is a kind of overarching narrative of Soviet redemption played out via his rhetoric. There is a tonal, linguistic, and narrative shift regarding the Soviet Union from Reagan's first term to his

[7] Reagan later said the letters "marked the cautious beginning on both sides of what was to become the foundation of not only a better relationship between our countries but a friendship between two men." Ronald Reagan, *An American Life: The Autobiography of Ronald Reagan* (New York: Threshold Editions, 1990), 612.

second. Complicating this tale, however, is the president's antecedent Soviet rhetoric. Reagan had to find a way to negotiate this change and maintain or create public support for his policy. In short, this dissertation asks how Reagan went from labeling the Soviet Union an "evil empire"[8] in 1983 to saying that that label was from "another time, another era"[9] in 1988, and the way his changing rhetoric created a specific Soviet redemption narrative.

In this chapter, I first offer a justification of this study—that is, why Reagan's Soviet rhetoric matters. Next, I review Cold War literature, paying particular attention to the way rhetorical scholars talk about how the Cold War affected and shaped the United States' understanding of itself on national and international levels. The ontological position of American statehood positioned itself against the ubiquitous understanding of what Soviet communism was socially, politically, and ethically. Following the Cold War section, I examine some of the major points of discussion about the power of presidential rhetoric from the mid-20th century to the present. I then review literature concerning Reagan's popularity as a subject of criticism and study, his rhetorical style, and his changing Soviet rhetoric. In the penultimate section, I preview the dissertation chapters. I conclude with a review of the themes presented above.

Justification

Reagan came to the office of the president as a confirmed anti-communist, distrustful of the Soviet Union, and seemingly resigned to the fact that the United States and the Soviet Union could never hope to do more than coexist; his Soviet rhetoric during his first term in office only strengthened that perception. Yet, when he left office, the US was on friendly terms with the Soviet Union and the President's tone had changed to a more hopeful one. Only a small part of

[8] Ronald Reagan, "Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals in Orlando, Florida," (speech, Orlando, FL, March 8, 1983), *The American Presidency Project*, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=41023.

[9] "The Moscow Summit 20 Years Later: From The Secret U.S. and Soviet Files," The National Security Archive, May 31, 2008, http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB251/.

Reagan criticism is devoted to how his rhetoric changed over time, and as such, this dissertation will help fill a lack in Reagan studies. Studying and critiquing Reagan's changing Soviet rhetoric is important because it fills gaps in Reagan literature and helps us better understand the way his rhetorical choices influenced world politics in the 1980s and beyond.

In general, the change in Reagan's once seemingly intractable Soviet rhetoric reminds us that rhetoric is a dynamic process, one which changes in response to new purposes, situations, and players. In particular, how Reagan negotiated adjusting his Soviet rhetoric in light of his antecedent rhetoric is a unique case of political rhetorical response and change. Reviewing a widely separated series of Reagan's rhetorical choices and processes is a chance to view the power of rhetoric in action, to see how it can fashion the new out of the old, help to mend decades-old social and political rivalries, and demonstrate how a rhetor might create one unified message—Reagan's aforementioned Soviet redemption narrative—out of a series of utterances over a span of time.

Cold War Literature Review

Rhetoric and the Cold War are inextricably linked. Some critics argue that the "Cold War is, itself, a rhetorical construction."[10] The definition of "Cold War" points to the unique rhetorical elements of such a conflict: "Hostilities short of armed conflict, consisting in threats, violent propaganda, subversive political activities, or the like."[11] The Cold War was generally a war of words, of competing messages about ideology, good and evil, and right and wrong, all in the service of achieving general and specific political goals. Rhetorical choices shaped the

[10] Martin J. Medhurst, introduction to *Critical Reflections on the Cold War: Linking Rhetoric and History*, ed. Martin J. Medhurst (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2000), 6; See also, Thomas Kane, "Foreign Policy Suppositions and Commanding Ideas," *Argumentation & Advocacy* 28, no. 2 (1991). *Communication & Mass Media Complete*, EBSCO*host*.

[11] *English Oxford Dictionary Online*, s.v. "cold war," http://original.britannica.com.proxy2.library.illinois.edu/eb/article-9067596.

language of US-Soviet foreign relations, the way American citizens understood the place of the Soviet Union in the world, and America's ideological and military oppositional position to communist states. This section of the chapter proceeds in three parts: First, a review of relevant historical Cold War sources. Second, an examination of major viewpoints in rhetorical studies on rhetoric and the Cold War. And third, a summary and brief discussion of historical and rhetorical studies sources in relation to this project.

The Cold War "needed a coherent and inclusive vocabulary in order to promote a variety of security concerns, economic interests, self-images, domestic political issues, and personal ambitions. Accordingly, the Cold War became a frame of reference through which to view, understand, and explain all the historical events that occurred during its lengthy life span."[12] It was in the early years of the Cold War that American politicians insisted that the United States must respond to Soviet threats, but "that the Soviet Union could at any time choose to end the threat by acting like a civilized nation."[13] Thus was laid the foundation for four decades of American rhetoric about the Soviet Union, a rhetoric taken up in varying degrees by every president from Harry Truman to Ronald Reagan: Internationally and domestically, the Soviet Union was a danger because of its adherence to the flawed ideology of communism, but redemption was always a possibility if they renounced their unsavory ways. In this way, "major American leaders supported by influential opinion-makers created the universal ideology of anticommunism, but applied it selectively in foreign affairs and selectively (though often indiscriminately) in domestic affairs."[14]

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[12] Thomas Kane, "Foreign Policy Suppositions and Commanding Ideas," *Argumentation & Advocacy* 28, no. 2 (1991): 80. *Communication & Mass Media Complete*, EBSCO*host*.
[13] Lynn Boyd Hinds and Theodore Otto Windt, Jr., *The Cold War as Rhetoric: The Beginnings, 1945-1950* (New York: Praeger, 1991), xvii.
[14] Ibid., xvii.

In America, and to some degree throughout the West, sitting US presidents generated and maintained the language of the Cold War. Thomas Kane contends that the language used to describe and understand the Cold War "[took] shape and character during the presidency of Harry S. Truman." Truman's rhetoric was "harsh," the tenor was "uncompromising," and it "exaggerated differences and minimized common interests" as it "claimed the superiority of the American experience."[15] Truman's "nondiplomatic style" of speech contributed to "the conformation, the interpretation, [and] the language" of nascent Cold War rhetoric.[16]

Despite Kane's argument that Truman was the sole architect of vitriolic Soviet rhetoric, there is a long history of American rhetoric that constituted the US as good and righteous. As such, any opposing system of governance donned a cloak of evil. Historian Robert J. McMahon notes that "American leaders have, since the foundation of the republic," championed "the uniqueness of America's civilization, history, character, and driving forces." There is a long tradition of political "depiction of the United States as the world's selfless guardian of peace, freedom, and democracy." US presidents "have habitually claimed that U.S. foreign policy aimed to defend the peace and to carry the blessings of freedom to other peoples. Many American statesmen have even found divine sanction for the conceit that the United States had a global mission to share its superior values, institutions, and culture with others."[17] Cold War presidents employed rhetoric of the same kind, emphasizing the "selflessness of American motives and the universality of U.S. objectives."[18] For example, Eisenhower's 1953 "State of the Union" admonished Americans to "be devoted with all our heart to the values we defend," and to

[15] Kane, "Foreign Policy Suppositions and Commanding Ideas."
[16] Ibid.
[17] Robert J. McMahon, "'By Helping Others, We Help Ourselves': The Cold War Rhetoric of American Foreign Policy," in *Critical Reflections on the Cold War: Linking Rhetoric and History*, eds. Martin J. Medhurst and H.W. Brands (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2000), 233.
[18] Ibid., 234.

"know that each of these values and virtues applies with equal force at the ends of the earth and in our relations with our neighbor next door."[19] Eisenhower's rhetoric fell in line with McMahon's contention that presidential rhetoric presented American values as universally good, and through such rhetoric, presidents "implied (and sometimes directly stated) that any nation or group that would oppose such objectives was, by definition, evil."[20] Cold War presidents argued that there existed a global "interdependence," and that the "loss of peace or freedom anywhere will endanger peace and freedom everywhere." As such, "the United States *must* act as global guardian for the sake of its own welfare and security. Idealism and realism, at least in this vision, meld."[21]

McMahon's observations point to the interconnectedness of domestic and foreign policies. When one advocates for certain foreign policies, one advocates for domestic and international "truths." Domestic and foreign policy rhetoric was one and the same, polarizing supporters and detractors of American democracy. Truman's "Truman Doctrine" speech explicitly addressed the polarized state of US and Soviet ideology and interests. Democracy, said Truman, "is based upon the will of the majority, and is distinguished by free institutions, representative government, free elections, guarantees of individual liberty, freedom of speech and religion, and freedom from political oppression." Ostensibly, those were positive attributes of America's "good" governmental ideology. Conversely, Soviet communist ideology was "based upon the will of a minority forcibly imposed upon the majority. It relies upon terror and oppression, a controlled press and radio, fixed elections, and the suppression of personal

[19] Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union," (speech, Washington, DC, February 2, 1953), *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=9829.
[20] McMahon, "'By Helping Others, We Help Ourselves,'" 234.
[21] Ibid., 235.

freedoms."[22] Such comparisons recur throughout the Cold War, perhaps the most famous being John F. Kennedy's challenge to those who would champion communism or question why democracy and communism were incompatible. He simply told people to "Come to Berlin" [23] if they wanted to see the falsity of those ideas and issues.

Cold War presidential rhetoric was not monolithic however; presidents sometimes eschewed polarization for more peaceful or conciliatory words. For example, Kennedy's American University commencement address "demonstrated a new understanding of reality—the possibility of peace with an adversary—that the audience should embrace."[24] The reason that the US should pursue peace with the Soviet Union was because the alternative was total war. Such a war, said Kennedy, "makes no sense" because the US and Soviet Union "can maintain large and relatively invulnerable nuclear forces and refuse to surrender without resort to those forces," because of the awesome power of nuclear weapons, and because "deadly poisons produced by a nuclear exchange would be carried by wind and water and soil and seed to the far corners of the globe and to generations yet unborn."[25] Negotiation was desirable because it assured the future of the human race and because the facts of the historical situation led naturally to negotiation. Kennedy connected peace abroad with peace and freedom in the United States, and those who would help guide citizens toward peace and freedom at home were those with the "authority" to do so: the Executive and Legislative branches of the government.[26] Thus, the government was

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[22] Harry S. Truman, "Special Message to the Congress on Greece and Turkey: The Truman Doctrine," (speech, Washington, DC, March 12, 1947), *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=12846.

[23] John F. Kennedy, "Remarks in the Rudolph Wilde Platz, Berlin," (speech, Berlin, West Germany, June 26, 1963), *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=9307.

[24] Denise M. Bostdorff and Shawna H. Ferris, "John F. Kennedy at American University: The Rhetoric of the Possible, Epideictic Progression, and the Commencement of Peace," *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 100, no.4 (2014): 408.

[25] John F. Kennedy, "Commencement Address at American University in Washington," (speech, Washington, DC, June 10, 1963), *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=9266.

[26] Ibid.

tasked with being, as Jimmy Carter would later say, "competent and compassionate."[27] Still, although presidents sometimes used rhetoric that relied less on opposition and more on cooperation, rhetoric that pitted the US against the Soviet Union was more common.

Norman Graebner says that "the American Cold War was fundamentally a rhetorical exercise. It emerged and thrived on images of impending global disaster."[28] Among any number of disasters was communist expansion outside of Eastern Europe and Asia. Thus the US enacted a policy of containment, a "strategy that aimed at restraining Soviet expansionism through the projection of U.S. power and the building of resilient alliances with non-Communist states."[29] Although the military strength of the communists was certainly an issue in Cold War rhetoric, many presidents argued that the Soviet Union did not always contrive to conquer the world militarily but through "the limitless promise of Soviet ideological expansion."[30] US officials claimed that the goal of the Soviet Union was to create a Soviet "world hegemony."[31]

The core messages of presidential Cold War rhetoric remained, to varying degrees, static throughout its four decades: The Soviet Union, with its flawed ideologies, was aggressive, morally and politically corrupt, and bent on expanding its influence throughout the world. In response, the US would be vigilant and respond to communist threats. The antithetical nature of communism to democracy meant that peace could not be achieved, but coexistence was within reach if both sides negotiated in good faith. Negotiating in good faith would be hard, of course, because presidential rhetoric stressed the malevolent nature of communism, especially in light of

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[27] Jimmy Carter, "Inaugural Address," (speech, Washington, DC, January 20, 1977), *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=6575.
[28] Norman A. Graebner, "Myth and Reality: America's Rhetorical Cold War," in *Critical Reflections on the Cold War: Linking Rhetoric and History*, eds. Martin J. Medhurst and H.W. Brands (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2000), 20.
[29] Ned O'Gorman, *Spirits of the Cold War: Contesting Worldviews in the Classical Age of American Security Strategy* (Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2012), 22.
[30] Graebner, 21
[31] Ibid., 22.

a benevolent US democracy. Simply, the US and the Soviet Union were diametrically opposed in the oldest of literary conflicts: good versus evil. The ever-present stock arguments, solutions, and appeals to Soviet "issues" repeated by presidents from Truman to Carter found their way into all areas of public and political discussion.

The concept of a "cold war," however, holds a large measure of ambivalence. Such ambivalence points to the folly of attempting to study and talk about the Cold War as a static, decades-long event.[32] The Cold War was at times "hotter" than at other times, and the rhetoric of US and Soviet leaders and culture-makers guaranteed that historical and rhetorical moments and situations demanded shifting ways and modes of speaking about the US-Soviet relationship. Rhetorical scholarship has long endeavored to make sense of such changing and contingent rhetoric, most prominently through discussion of Cold War rhetoric as strategic, metaphorical, and ideological. These discussions have been arguments about how to view and evaluate rhetoric but are in no way neatly compartmentalized from one another; there is overlap among them.

Martin J. Medhurst argues that Cold War rhetoric was strategic and echoes Scott when he notes that rhetoric and the Cold War were in an ever-changing relationship modified by shifting rhetorical and historical events.[33] Rhetoric was key to the Cold War, says Medhurst, because in the Cold War "weapons are words, images, symbolic actions, and, on occasion, physical actions undertaken by covert means."[34] Cold War rhetoric was strategic rhetoric because it was "a matter of symbolic action, action intended to forward the accomplishment of strategic goals—social, political, economic, military, or diplomatic."[35] Medhurst contends that two major goals of

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[32] Ibid., 4.
[33] Martin J. Medhurst, "Rhetoric and Cold War: A Strategic Approach," in *Cold War Rhetoric: Strategy, Metaphor, and Ideology*, Robert Ivie and Martin J. Medhurst and Robert Scott and Philip Wander et. al. (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1997), 19.
[34] Ibid., 19.
[35] Ibid.,19-20.

the Cold War were preventing a "hot war" and expanding the political influence of the United States and Soviet Union.[36] Avoiding armed conflict while expanding a country's sphere of influence is rightly a difficult proposition; the heavy lifting of such a project is shouldered by rhetoric. Myriad shifting factors which threatened to upset the balancing act in which US and Soviet politicians engaged throughout the Cold War[37] necessitated the skilled use of rhetoric in keeping the Cold War cold.

Where Medhurst argues for the primacy of rhetoric as strategic, Robert L. Ivie contends that metaphor played an important role in Cold War discourse. Communist adversaries of the United States were described as mortal threats, germs, plagues and barbarians, while freedom (associated with the US) was described as "weak, fragile, and feminine—as vulnerable to disease and rape."[38] Ivie maintains that one of the dangers of such rhetoric is that we may begin to see metaphors as literal, then act upon that perception.[39] Reagan's Soviet rhetoric took advantage of his audience's belief in the literal value of metaphors, that the Soviets were indeed harbingers of the death of Western freedoms and values. Even now, we retain a sense of our place in the world in relation to other political powers through a lens shaped by Reagan's Cold War declarations of the danger inherent in the savage system of communism.

The third in this tripartite view of Cold War rhetoric is the ideological. One of the major rhetorical strategies of Cold War presidents was to present a polarized view of the United States and the Soviet Union. In all ways, went the argument, the Soviet Union was the antithesis of the

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[36] Ibid., 20.

[37] Medhurst names five such factors, which he calls constraints: [H]istorical, political, economic, diplomatic, and military." Medhurst, "Rhetoric and Cold War: A Strategic Approach," 22.

[38] Robert L. Ivie, "Cold War Motives and the Rhetorical Metaphor: A Framework of Criticism," in *Cold War Rhetoric: Strategy, Metaphor, and Ideology*, Robert Ivie and Martin J. Medhurst and Robert Scott and Philip Wander et. al. (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1997), 72; See also, Robert L. Ivie, "Speaking 'Common Sense' About the Soviet Threat: Reagan's Rhetorical Stance," *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, no. 48 (1988).

[39] Ivie, "Cold War Motives and the Rhetorical Metaphor: A Framework of Criticism," 72; See also, Robert L. Ivie, "Metaphor and the Rhetorical Invention of Cold War "Idealists," *Communication Monographs*, no. 54 (1987).

United States. In societal, governmental and ethical matters, the US was on the side of "good," while the Soviet Union was on the side of "evil." Philip Wander offers an insightful frame through which scholars might understand such polarization: prophetic dualism. Prophetic dualism

> divides the world into two camps. Between them there is conflict. One side acts in accord with all that is good, decent, and at one with God's will. The other acts in direct opposition. Conflict between them is resolved only through the total victory of one side over the other. Since no guarantee exists that goodwill triumphs, there is no middle ground. Hence neutrality may be treated as a delusion, compromise appeasement, and negotiation a call for surrender.[40]

According to Wander, prophetic dualism rose to prominence in the nascent stages of Vietnam War policy rhetoric, specifically that which "concerned America's moral or spiritual superiority. Religious faith, moral insight, a respect for the laws of God formed a set of virtues attributed to the nation which...could be called upon not only to explain why those in power deserved to be there, but also why the United States should engage in certain kinds of action abroad."[41] Reagan's rhetoric often invoked the ideological superiority of the US system of government over communism and was his longest-lived Cold War argument.

Scholars of Cold War rhetoric as strategic, metaphorical, and ideological have produced reams of print "worked with great skill," but recently, Ned O'Gorman has emphasized abduction as a way to read Cold War texts that highlights the "'world-making' capacity of language"[42]

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[40] Philip Wander, "The Rhetoric of American Foreign Policy," in *Cold War Rhetoric: Strategy, Metaphor, and Ideology*, Robert Ivie and Martin J. Medhurst and Robert Scott and Philip Wander et. al. (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1997), 157.
[41] Ibid., 157.
[42] O'Gorman, *Spirits of the Cold War*, xiv.

through a combination of "strategic discourse" and "worldviews."[43] According to O'Gorman, worldviews are "a way of apprehending the world, entailing not only a way of seeing the world, but a way of *being* in it, and ultimately a distinct way of *talking* about it,"[44] and "are discerned by looking at the ways in which the world is addressed, constructed, and (re)formed in language."[45] By engaging both the strategic elements of rhetoric and the worldviews of Cold War rhetors, critics might uncover the "'motive force'" behind political statements.[46] O'Gorman's work provides a method of examination that offers a nuanced way of understanding both how and why Reagan's Soviet rhetoric was ultimately contingent and changeable after years of practiced, fixed, anti-communist oratory.

The aforementioned perspectives on Cold War rhetoric are not incompatible; they are different viewpoints that help paint a fuller portrait of an important aspect of the Cold War. Each helps me understand the ways in which Reagan's redemption narrative shaped a new view of the Soviet Union, one which used the power of the presidency to authorize a shift in American views of that nation.

Like Medhurst, I believe that rhetoric is essentially strategic, that it is a means to an end. Each utterance begs the assent of the audience to a speaker's goal. Reagan's goal, from his days as the president of the Screen Actors Guild to his farewell address as President of the United States of America, was most often to undermine the structure and support of communism. Like O'Gorman, I believe that understanding the motivations of political speech via worldviews offers the chance for a nuanced reading and understanding of Cold War rhetoric. Reagan's worldview of the moral, political, and social superiority of American democracy's precepts over the amoral,

[43] Ibid., xv.
[44] Ibid., xii.
[45] Ibid., 234.
[46] Ibid., xiii.

politically, and socially degenerate edicts of Soviet communism drove his Cold War rhetoric as he sought some way to dismantle that odious institution.

Presidency Literature Review

Two of the premises of this dissertation are that Ronald Reagan's Soviet rhetoric changed over the course of his presidency, and that this change helped facilitate both the start of a new US-Soviet political relationship and a new way of perceiving the Soviet Union. Such claims raise questions about the power of presidential rhetoric and how that power manifests itself in public contexts. My interpretation of the power of presidential rhetoric is a synthesis, or amalgamation, of a number of theories about presidential rhetoric and its capacity to initiate social and political change. The power of presidential rhetoric is both instrumental and constitutive, advancing political agendas and creating perceptions of people and issues. It promotes social and political discussions and actions which can be traced back to a president's orations. The power of presidential rhetoric rests in its ability to set in motion, or speed along, public and political action and perception. Whether the president publically raises an issue for the first time, echoes preexisting sentiments of an established issue or changes course on an issue, the office's position and visibility inevitably creates discussion, action, and perception of people and events.

The executive power of the President of the United States is more difficult to encapsulate than is found in the oft repeated idiom, "The president is the most powerful man in the world." The position of President of the United States is an influential one, but it is in the words of presidents that we find the fount of presidential power. Presidential rhetoric motivates, encourages, cajoles, demands, and inspires actions and reactions. I make these claims with the understanding that such statements are contentious in the arena of presidential rhetorical studies. What follows is a brief literature review of the scholarly discussion of the power of presidential

rhetoric and a justification for my claims on the power of presidential rhetoric. First, I review the literature on the power of presidential rhetoric. I discuss the ideas of the rhetorical power of the executive office in the pluralist and "going public" senses, as well as counter-arguments to its effectiveness and responses to those latter claims. Second, I define and explain my concept of the power of presidential rhetoric in conversation with the works in the literature review. Last, I reflect on the power of presidential rhetoric.

Arguments concerning the scope and influence of presidential rhetoric are now over fifty years old. In the mid-20th century, Richard Neustadt claimed that the power of the executive office was in its negotiating and bargaining positions—in its "power to persuade" other governmental actors.[47] This view of presidential power is a pluralist notion of the executive office—the president alone does not wield absolute authority or influence over governmental matters. Instead, influence is shared and facilitated by other branches of the government. The president is in many ways beholden to others to exercise the power of the Oval Office, often only flexing his political might when key negotiations loosen his restraints. Presidential power is not the ability to speak into being a policy or desire, nor to command other governmental actors, but "to convince such men that what the White House wants of them is what they ought to do for their sake and on their authority."[48] Neustadt contends that the president is a conduit through which power can flow, but he does not have the ability to control absolutely the movement of that power.[49] How the president affects the flow of power is through words and actions and where and in what moment he chooses to speak or act.[50]

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[47] Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan* (New York: The Free Press, 1990), 11.
[48] Ibid., 30.
[49] Ibid., 150.
[50] Ibid., 150.

Where Neustadt argues that the power of the presidency resides in the ability to persuade other governmental actors, Jeffery K. Tulis argues that the power of the president manifests itself most strongly when he brings his messages directly to the public. In turn, the people may pressure Congress to follow the president's lead regarding policies.[51] This shift toward direct public appeal constitutes a "true transformation" of the presidency,[52] what Tulis calls the "rhetorical presidency." Such "popular or mass rhetoric," says Tulis, "has become a principal tool of presidential government."[53] The rhetorical presidency places power in a president's persuasive speech and his capacity to convince the public that his policy, initiative, or directive is right for the country.

Samuel Kernell expanded on Tulis's work, labeling the turn toward speaking directly to the citizenry "going public," which "is a strategy whereby a president promotes himself and his policies in Washington by appealing to the American public for support."[54] While acknowledging the increase in presidents going public, Kernell warns that relying on direct public appeal in some ways undermines the bargaining component of the executive office. There are four ways going public undermines bargaining: First, it "rarely includes the kinds of exchanges necessary, in pluralist theory, for the American political system to function properly." Second, it "fails to extend benefits for compliance, but freely imposes costs for noncomplicance." Third, "going public entails public posturing," which "fixes the president's bargaining position." Last, and possibly "most injurious to bargaining," it "undermines the legitimacy of other politicians."[55] Going public contradicts Neustadt's position on the power of the presidency, so Kernell asks, "Why should presidents come to favor a strategy of leadership

[51] Jeffery K. Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 7.
[52] Ibid., 7.
[53] Ibid., 4.
[54] Samuel Kernell, *Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership* (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2007), 1-2.
[55] Ibid., 3-4.

that appears so incompatible with the principles of pluralist theory?" The answer is because "[p]olitics in Washington may no longer be as tractable to bargaining as it once was. Presidents prefer to go public because the strategy offers a better prospect of success than it did in the past."[56] Presidents have learned that public opinion can be far-reaching and powerful.

Although seemingly at odds with one another, Neustadt and Tulis's theories share some ideas. The rhetoric of the Oval Office affects policies and agendas through both negotiations with other governmental actors and by going public. With whom the president negotiates may change depending on what the president would like to happen. That bargaining partner may not always be another government official either. In a sense, going public is a form of negotiating with the citizenry. When the president speaks out on an issue of domestic or international import, he is essentially negotiating his stance. In return, the president receives criticism and praise that can shape future decisions regarding that particular issue. Such a perspective elucidates how presidential rhetoric acts while taking into account both pluralist and going public theories of presidential rhetoric.

According to a number of critics, presidential rhetoric is a powerful tool that shapes political and social movement. Ontologically, presidential rhetoric constitutes the citizenry as uniquely American. Specifically, the sway going public holds in American politics is viewed as especially influential. The argument that going public is an effective and legitimate strategy for presidents to exercise the power of their speech has won broad acceptance among rhetoricians; however, the efficacy of going public has proved a contentious claim in other disciplines. Political scientist George C. Edwards is the most prominent skeptic of the effectiveness of going public. Edwards contends that there is little to no empirical evidence that presidential rhetoric

[56] Ibid., 10.

holds significant sway over the public.[57] Edwards argues that presidents do not meaningfully change public opinion through charisma and by going public, and that they "are not directors who lead the public where it otherwise refuses to go, thus reshaping the contours of the political landscape."[58] Instead, chief executives are "facilitators" of popular public opinion who "may endow the views of their supporters with structure and purpose and exploit opportunities in their environments to accomplish their joint goals."[59] Critics who insist that charismatic presidents hold greater influence over public opinion are not giving the public enough credit. The public often "separate[s] the person from the performance," and it is not necessary for a president to be likeable to advance his agenda. Plainly, Edwards states, "the ability of leaders to move the public is limited, and thus the role of the individual leader may be less important than we think."[60] As such, Edwards challenges rhetoricians to explain why presidential rhetoric matters.[61]

Where Edwards seeks to downplay or dismiss the power of presidential rhetoric, Medhurst differentiates between the two terms and offers a counterpoint to Edwards. Medhurst contends that there are fundamental differences between those who study the rhetorical presidency and those who study presidential rhetoric. Focusing on presidency directs attention to the presidency as an institution of established rules, norms, history, and legitimacy. Focusing on rhetoric directs attention to "the particular arena within which one can study the principles and practices of rhetoric, understood as the human capacity to see what is most likely to be persuasive to a given audience on a given occasion."[62] When rhetorical scholars engage

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[57] George C. Edwards III, *One Deaf Ears: The Limits of the Bully Pulpit* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 74.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid., 106.
[61] George C. Edwards III, "Presidential Rhetoric: What Difference Does It Make?," in *Beyond the Rhetorical Presidency*, ed. Martin J. Medhurst (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1996), 201.
[62] Martin J. Medhurst, "Introduction," in *Beyond the Rhetorical Presidency*, ed. Martin J. Medhurst (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1996), xiv.

presidential rhetoric, they engage rhetoric in a unique context in order to further their knowledge and understanding of rhetoric. For Medhurst, rhetorical study is about asking questions regarding artistry, intent, strategy, genre, style, argument, situations and audience effectivity that are not quantifiable.[63]

The idea of "effects" in relation to presidential rhetoric, then, is Edwards's stumbling block. As David Zarefsky notes, "few would argue seriously that mediated messages make *no* difference," because there is always some reaction to presidential rhetoric. Zarefsky further argues that Edwards conceives of the terms "presidential rhetoric" and "effect" too narrowly. "Presidential rhetoric" becomes only public speech and effects are viewed as "quantitatively measurable changes in indices of people's attitudes or beliefs." The problem with such narrow definitions of these terms is that they over-simplify "understanding of the process of communication and the nature of rhetorical transactions."[64] The effect of a rhetorical act is rarely quantifiable. As such, Edwards seems to miss the mark in terms of rhetorical criticism.

Discussion about the extent of presidential power and rhetoric, then, falls into a small set of arguments: First, a president wields the power to persuade but his power is tempered by the pluralist machinations of the executive office. Second, presidents find great success advancing their political agendas by abandoning pluralist constraints and speaking directly to the citizenry. Third, there is significant debate that going public significantly advances political agendas, or that the public is easily swayed by direct political appeals. Last, that trying to quantify the effects of public opinion is stymied by the unquantifiable nature of the power of rhetoric and by the limiting nature of definitions.

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[63] Martin J. Medhurst, "Afterword: The Ways of Rhetoric," in *Beyond the Rhetorical Presidency*, ed. Martin J. Medhurst (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1996), 225.

[64] David Zarefsky, "Presidential Rhetoric and the Power of Definition," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (2004): 608.

I enter this conversation with an understanding of the power of presidential rhetoric that synthesizes aspects of pluralist and going public theories. Presidential rhetoric is a form of public negotiation that sets in motion, or speeds along, public and political action, as well as creates and sustains social and political momentum. When a president brings to light a public issue, national or international initiative or a political agenda, he creates discussion, action, and perception. The same is true when he takes up a pre-existing issue, initiative or agenda. In part, presidential power is housed in the ability of a president to facilitate social and political action. Lone instances of presidential rhetoric do not create end results or obvious effects. Instead, presidential speech—often a number of oratories in succession— works to speed along processes that eventually end in a result or effect.

If we look only at singular instances of presidential oratory, Edwards's view of the power of presidential rhetoric—that significant change does not result from presidential speech—makes some sense. However, Edwards's view differs from my own because I am not concerned with effects criterion in a quantitative framework, but in the qualitative ways rhetoric demonstrates the power of presidential rhetoric. As Amos Kiewe and Davis W. Houck point out:

> The fault in Edwards's reasoning lies in misunderstanding the rhetorical process altogether and treating it as a testable formula—as effects with observable causes. The fault also lies in the way he operationalizes his research, discounting the qualitative value of presidential communication and the abundance of sources, especially primary sources, that often shed more accurate light on an individual president and the effect of specific speeches.[65]

[65] Amos Kiewe and Davis W. Houck, "Introduction," in *The Effects of Rhetoric and the Rhetoric of Effects*, eds. Amos Kiewe and Davis W. Houck (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2015), 3.

It is a dubious claim that one speech might create an immediate grand effect, but one can examine if, and how, people changed the way in which they approach a subject of presidential speech. Do journalists afford more print to a question recently broached by a president? Have commentators and political wonks devoted further time to discussing the particulars of presidential communication in the wake of a speech? Do political actors initiate a push for a specific political action after presidential commentary? Does the public talk about people(s) or events differently in the wake of presidential rhetoric? These are the kinds of questions presidential rhetoric scholars should be asking; in short "the critic needs to engage a text's interlocutors in order to understand how a message has resonated (or failed to resonate) with them, especially when such evidence is available."[66] Instances of presidential rhetoric over a span of time may lead to an effect, and if a number of presidential addresses are viewed over a set period of time, we see a kind of narrative effect emerge. The story of how a president's rhetoric promotes action develops in such instances. Where Edwards seeks quantifiable evidence of the causal power of single instances of presidential oratory, I am interested in the concomitant relationship between Ronald Reagan's Soviet rhetoric and the correlated political and narrative events that emerge from such a relationship

My project takes as one of its most important elements, the idea that presidential rhetoric is powerful in its ability to facilitate change on national and international levels. Such a claim requires understanding how presidential rhetoric works to enact change and how previous scholars have conceived of the power of presidential rhetoric. There is over fifty years of scholarly discussion about the power of the modern president, and nearly all of it inevitably addresses presidential rhetoric, whether directly or indirectly. The number of works arguing for or against how and in what capacity presidential rhetoric affects social and political issues and

[66] Ibid., 6.

history is sizeable and often contentious. We can conclude that the power of presidential rhetoric is a force deserving of attention. This dissertation should add to the literature on the power of presidential rhetoric, not in a way that advocates presidential oratory as quantifiable tool of causation, but as an agent for social and political discussions, actions, and perceptions.

Reagan Literature Review

Reagan was popular with the citizenry for most of his presidency, is often referred to as "The Great Communicator," and even after he left office, popular press and scholars alike wrote prodigiously about him. As such, the literature on Reagan is legion. A general search for the term "Ronald Reagan" at Amazon.com returns nearly 20,500 results, over 14,000 of which are book results. In academic circles, he is just as popular: In the EBSCOhost database alone, a search for the term "Ronald Reagan" nets over 26,000 results. Reagan's legacy in presidential rhetoric studies cannot be overstated, for, as Mary Stuckey notes, "Largely as a result of the Reagan administration, scholars now focus on the increasing importance of presidential speech."[67] Reagan took on many roles as a speaker—hero, priest, champion of the American past, and moralist, to name a few.[68] It is his overwhelming rhetorical legacy that has resulted in his broad popularity as an object of fascination and study for scholars and non-academics alike.[69] What follows then can only be a brief account of some of the major themes in Reagan studies.

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[67] Mary Stuckey, "Legitimating Leadership: The Rhetoric of Succession as a Genre of Presidential Discourse," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 22, no 2 (1992): 25.

[68] See Richard E. Crable and Steven L. Vibbert, "Argumentative Stance and Political Faith Healing: 'The Dream Will Come True,'" *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 69 no. 3 (1983); Kathryn M. Olson, "Completing: the Picture: Replacing Generic Embodiments in the Historical Flow," *Communication Quarterly* 41, no. 3 (1993), 310; and Henry Z. Scheele, "Ronald Reagan's 1980 Acceptance Address: A Focus on American Values," *The Western Journal of Speech* 52, no. 1 (1984): 60.

[69] There has been a great deal written about Reagan's rhetorical accomplishments in general, but some of his individual speeches have received focused attention, such as Douglas Brinkley's *The Boys of Pointe du Hoc: Ronald Reagan, D-Day, and the U.S. Army 2nd Ranger Battalion* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005), and Robert C. Rowland and John M. Jones' *Reagan at Westminster: Foreshadowing the End of the Cold War* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2010).

Reagan's political ideologies were formed in Dixon, Illinois, in large part because of his family's political stance. His father, Jack Reagan, "one of the few Democrats in town," worked to put some of the New Deal programs into place in Dixon. Reagan said that Jack's job "gave me my first opportunity to watch government in action."[70] Politically, Reagan followed his parents' lead; he cast his first presidential vote for Franklin D. Roosevelt, whom he "idolized."[71] Reagan "revere[d] Roosevelt as a communicator and a leader, even after he came to disagree with almost every economic component of the New Deal."[72]

Long before Reagan emerged as a political force, he was passionate about affairs of state and about what he saw as a growing communist threat. Jane Wyman, Reagan's first wife, said that shortly after their 1940 marriage, she realized he "was obsessed…by the insidious climate of evil he saw encroaching from two directions—Europe on the one hand, and communist forces in the United States on the other."[73] His obsession with politics strained their marriage, and Wyman appeared to have "resented Reagan's growing obsession with politics, his incessant talk about national and international affairs, and his inattention to her views and needs."[74]

After World War II, Reagan said, he was still a "New Dealer to the core,"[75] and he "emerged from the war as a bleeding-heart liberal intent on making the world a better place."[76] Part of making the world a better place was fighting the influence of, and eventually eliminating, communism. Reagan feared communists were infiltrating groups, societies, and guilds in Hollywood. Some critics argue that he had a reason to be worried about communists in positions

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[70] Reagan*, An American Life*, 67.
[71] Ibid., 66.
[72] Thomas W. Evans, *The Education of Ronald Reagan, The General Electric Years and the Untold Story of His Conversion to Conservatism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 3.
[73] Anne Edwards, *Early Reagan* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1987), 202.
[74] William E. Pemberton, *Exit with Honor: The Life and Presidency of Ronald Reagan* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), 28.
[75] Ronald Reagan, *An American Life*, 105.
[76] Pemberton, 29.

of power in Hollywood, because they attempted "to advance communist influence in the film industry."[77] From his days as a board member, and later president, of the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) in the late 1940s and early 1950s, to his witness testimony before the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC), Reagan used his public visibility to denounce the tenets of communism.[78] Reagan went so far as to "[serve] as a confidential informant for the FBI," and "kept agents informed about pro-Communist influences in the Screen Actors Guild and other Hollywood organizations."[79] After the HUAC hearings, Reagan became a "full-fledged anti-communist leader," viewing himself as a "citizen-crusader" intent on protecting "traditional American values."[80]

Reagan meticulously followed political maneuverings in Washington, learning the issues and the arguments that came out of the nation's capital. In 1954, as his career as a movie star wound down, he accepted an offer from General Electric to host the weekly television program, *General Electric Theater*. Part of the job was being a "traveling ambassador," which took him around the country to General Electric's factories where he spoke to the employees.[81] Reagan claimed that speaking so often, and to so many people, was not "a bad apprenticeship for someone who'd someday enter public life" and "became almost a postgraduate course in political science."[82] During his time at General Electric his speeches became more polarized and

[77] Dinesh D'Souza, *Ronald Reagan, How an Ordinary Man Became an Extraordinary Leader* (New York: The Free Press, 1997), 38.
[78] Michael Schaller, *Reckoning with Reagan: America and its President in the 1980s* (New York: Oxford Press, 1992), 9-10.
[79] Scott Herhold, "Reagan Acted as Informant for the FBI," *San Jose Mercury News*, August 15, 1985, accessed May 6, 2016, http://www.mercurynews.com/ci_16683525.
[80] Pemberton, 33.
[81] Evans, *The Education of Ronald Reagan*, 3.
[82] Reagan, *An American Life*, 128-29.

the company believed Reagan had become a "controversial liability."[83] In 1962, the same year he registered as a Republican, Reagan was fired from General Electric.[84]

Studies of Reagan's rhetoric often address his persona, use of narrative, and/or ideology. Such distinctions are not so neat, however, because these three areas of Reagan's speech interanimate and bolster each other. Persona, narrative, and ideology do not simply form a kind Venn diagram of Reagan's rhetoric; instead, these three areas reinforce and buttress one another. Perceptions of Reagan were not based solely on his way of speaking or the way he presented himself, but on his physical being as well; he was tall, good-looking, and athletic. The public knew him as an actor and an outdoorsman—a romantic figure. In 1982, Walter R. Fisher argued "that there is a romantic strain in American history and politics,"[85] postulating that one day Reagan's legacy might well be one of romantic, presidential heroics. Fisher argues that Reagan's physical appearance, his regard for the US military, and his belief in America's successful future were all a part of him winning the 1980 presidential election;[86] when combined with Reagan's rhetoric, he becomes a kind of romantic, rhetorical powerhouse.[87] Fisher is correct that Reagan's image and his oratory were often enmeshed in one another, each supporting and strengthening the other.

Physically, Reagan cut a striking figure, but a large part of his popularity was his affable, everyman persona[88] combined with a conversational, simple rhetorical manner.[89] He loved his

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[83] Lou Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), 89.
[84] Ibid., 89.
[85] Walter R. Fisher, "Romantic Democracy, Ronald Reagan, and Presidential Heroes," *The Western Journal of Speech Communication*, no. 46 (1982): 299.
[86] Ibid., 303.
[87] Ibid., 304.
[88] Michael Weiler and W. Barnett Pearce, *Reagan and Public Discourse in America* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1992).
[89] Gil Troy, *Morning in America: How Ronald Reagan Invented the 1980's* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), and William F. Lewis, "Telling America's Story: Narrative Form and the Reagan Presidency," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73, no. 3 (1987).

country and its people, and his rhetorical style reflected that. His style was built on stories of "regular" people and the ability to explain complex ideas in a way that the general public could easily understand.[90] His speech was "relatable" to the American public, and he used "everyday citizen heroes" as exemplars in his oratory.[91] Reagan's rhetoric appealed to Americans partly because he had an "easy" way of speaking; his speeches were often "clear, concise, and short," and he regularly turned to self-effacement to inject humor into a speech.[92]

Even his foibles bolstered his persona. Although Reagan garnered praise from the public and critics alike for his oratorical skill, he was also known for his verbal gaffes, which still stand as part of his legacy. The president was well-spoken, but in his uttered miscues, Americans recognized themselves, not a slick, Washington politician. Reagan often made "impromptu and prepared remarks that were less than accurate," yet, his verbal missteps did little to stymie his popularity. Reagan's habit of saying what was on his mind, in conjunction with his "[a]miability, rhetorical flair, straight talk, and tough-mindedness" buoyed his reputation with the American people.[93] One of Reagan's strengths as an orator was that his persona and rhetorical choices were consistent with one another; he presented himself as the average American and spoke in a manner consistent as such.

From his earliest days as a speechmaker, Reagan consistently employed narrative forms. Stories were the hallmark of Reagan's rhetoric and "functioned more as truths" for political and social assertions than as subjective observations.[94] Narrative was a vehicle for Reagan's arguments and interpretations. Reagan told stories of good and evil in conflict. The most famous

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[90] Colleen J. Shogan, "Coolidge and Reagan: The Rhetorical Influence of Silent Cal on the Great Communicator," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*, no. 9 (2006): 215.
[91] Ibid., 220.
[92] Crable and Vibbert, "Argumentative Stance and Political Faith Healing," 291.
[93] Ibid., 290 and 291.
[94] David W. Houck and Amos Kiewe, "America in the Beautiful," in *Actor, Ideologue, Politician: The Public Speeches of Ronald Reagan*, eds. Davis W. Houck and Amos Kiewe (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992), 1.

of these conflicts was of noble Democracy and villainous Communism. During Reagan's time in political office, narrative served as more than a way to connect with an audience, "it guided Reagan's policy decisions, motivated his audience and "help[ed] to account for the variety of reactions to his rhetoric."[95] When one looks at Reagan's rhetoric, it is clear that his use of narrative was the foundation of his reputation as an orator and to the popularity of his speechmaking as a whole.[96] Reagan's story-telling ability was a point of strength during his time in office,[97] for Reagan, says Kathleen Hall Jamieson, "[b]etter than any modern president...[understood] the power of dramatic narrative to create an identity for an audience, to involve the audience, and to bond that audience to him."[98] Reagan successfully used the narrative of everyday "heroes" to connect with, and encourage, his audience.[99] His narratives were often built on "common sense" anecdotes that used "practical analogies to explain and to justify his policy choices."[100] Wayne Booth's assertion that the author of narrative seeks to "impose his

[95] William F. Lewis, "Telling America's Story: Narrative Form and the Reagan Presidency," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73, no. 3 (1987): 281.
[96] See Bonnie J. Dow, "The Function of Epideictic and Deliberative Strategies in Presidential Crisis Rhetoric," *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, 53, no. 3 (1989); Walter R. Fisher, "Romantic Democracy, Ronald Reagan, and Presidential Heroes," *The Western Journal of Speech Communication* 46, no. 3 (1982). Here, Fisher argues Reagan is the embodiment of the Western hero narrative; G. Thomas Goodnight, "Ronald Reagan's Reformulation of the Rhetoric of War: Analysis of the 'Zero Option,' 'Evil Empire,' and 'Star Wars' Addresses," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 72, no. 4 (1986); William F. Lewis, "Telling America's Story: Narrative Form and the Reagan Presidency," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73, no. 3 (1987); Robert L. Ivie, "Speaking 'Common Sense' about the Soviet Threat: Reagan's Rhetorical Stance," *The Western Journal of Communication* 48, no. 1 (1984); Mark P. Moore, "Reagan's Quest for Freedom in the 1987 State of the Union Address, *The Western Journal of Speech Communication* 53, no. 3 (1989); Colleen J. Shogan, "Coolidge and Reagan: The Rhetorical Influence of Silent Cal on the Great Communicator," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*, 9, no. 2 (2006); and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Eloquence in an Electronic Age: The Transformation of Political Speechmaking* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).
[97] J. Jeffery Auer, "Acting like a President; or, What Has Ronald Reagan Done to Political Speaking?," in *Reagan and Public Discourse in America* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1992).
[98] Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Eloquence in an Electronic Age: The Transformation of Political Speechmaking* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 137.
[99] Shogan, "Coolidge and Reagan: The Rhetorical Influence of Silent Cal on the Great Communicator," 215.
[100] Lewis, "Telling America's Story: Narrative Form and the Reagan Presidency," 293.

fictional world upon the reader"[101] falls in line with public discourse that recounts historical moments and events, such as Ronald Reagan's Soviet discourse.

The President's use of narrative included elements of good storytelling, particularly vivid description. It was common for Reagan to use topoi of savagery as markers for foreign leaders with whom he disagreed politically or ideologically.[102] Reagan employed stories of the communist Soviet government's misdeeds in countries around the world, juxtaposed with stories of the goodness of Western democracies, as a tool to differentiate between two disparate political and ideological entities; thus, narrative and ideology were bounded in Reagan's rhetoric. Reagan portrayed the Soviet Union as an aggressive, malicious, savage government.[103] Carol Winkler contends that Reagan commonly engaged in "personal attack to stress the irredeemable evil nature of their enemies who could only await opportunity to produce more havoc and destruction."[104] Reagan was "relentless" in his attacks on the Soviet Union,[105] so much so, that it "border[ed] on caricature."[106] Winkler is critical of Reagan, but her observation points to the way in which aspects of Reagan's rhetoric interanimated one another; the president was ideologically opposed to communism, and as such, his descriptors and language choices reflected that opposition.

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[101] Wayne Booth, "Preface to the First Edition," in *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago press, 1983), xiii.
[102] Robert L. Ivie, "Speaking 'Common Sense' About the Soviet Threat: Reagan's Rhetorical Stance, *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, no. 48 (1988), and Carol Winkler, "Parallels in Preemptive War Rhetoric: Reagan on Libya; Bush 43 on Iraq," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*, no. 2 (2007).
[103] See Ivie, "Speaking 'Common Sense' About the Soviet Threat; Carol Winkler, "Parallels in Preemptive War Rhetoric: Reagan on Libya; Bush 43 on Iraq," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 10, no. 2 (2007); and Dow, "The Function of Epideictic and Deliberative Strategies in Presidential Crisis Rhetoric."
[104] Winkler, "Parallels in Preemptive War Rhetoric," 309-310.
[105] Scheele, "Reagan's 1980 Acceptance Address: A Focus on American Values," 52.
[106] Robert C. Rowland and John M. Jones, "Reagan at the Brandenburg gate: Moral Clarity Tempered by Pragmatism," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 9, no. 1 (2006): 21.

In the same way Reagan's persona matched his narrative style, and his narratives reflected his disdain for communism, the president's persona and worldview—his ideology—were married. As the everyman, Reagan vehemently opposed communism as antithetical to American democracy; his Soviet rhetoric mirrored that. For Reagan, communism was a hostile system that produced fear and disquiet. Even in Reagan's pre-presidential rhetoric, communism was always close to home, not an abstract ideology threatening Europe and Asia. The "distinctive thread in Reagan's pre-presidential speeches," says Daniel T. Rodgers, "was the way they turned the Cold War's anxieties back on domestic policies—their displacement of the totalitarian nightmare from the world scene to the stealthy, creeping, insidious growth of government at home."[107] In a June, 1952 commencement address at William Woods College, Reagan described America as "less of a place than an idea"; the idea was "the inherent love of freedom." Reagan said there was a "great ideological struggle that we find ourselves engaged in today," in the same manner Americans once struggled against "Kaiserism" and "Hitlerism." The foundation of these -isms was in one person or government's desire to "rule over mankind."[108] Just as Cold War presidents stressed the sinister nature of communism and its pervasive threats, Reagan talked about the way communism endangered all aspects of American life.

Although Reagan was concerned with communist intrusion into American life, he also feared its spread across the globe. In "A Time for Choosing," or what was called "the Speech," perhaps his most famous pre-presidential speech, Reagan urged America to fight against communist encroachment: "We're at war with the most dangerous enemy that has ever faced mankind in his long climb from the swamp to the stars, and it's been said if we lose that war, and in so doing lose this way of freedom of ours, history will record with the greatest astonishment

[107]Daniel T. Rodgers, *Age of Fracture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 22.
[108] Ronald Reagan, "America the Beautiful," in *Actor, Ideologue, Politician: The Public Speeches of Ronald Reagan*, eds. Davis W. Houck and Amos Kiewe (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992), 5.

that those who had the most to lose did the least to prevent its happening." There were some who would give into the communist threat out of fear of war, but Reagan insisted that to live in communism was to relinquish the freedoms of democracy; that price was too high: "You and I know and do not believe that life is so dear and peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery."[109]

Before his ascension to the presidency, Reagan had a reputation as an ardent anticommunist. He openly criticized the Soviet system, often in the harshest of terms. His history of scathing Soviet rhetoric frightened many Americans, so much so that it became a point of contention in his 1980 run to the White House, so he "had to reassure the American people of his commitment to peace."[110] Reagan insisted that he would work toward peace between the two superpowers, but some critics wondered if "Reagan's commitment to peace was more rhetorical than actual."[111] Judging from Reagan's early presidential Soviet rhetoric, Americans might have wondered if they should have heeded those critics. In the beginning of his presidency, Reagan's Soviet Rhetoric was sharp and unforgiving. He made no attempt to hide his disdain for the communist system nor its prospects for the future: "There was a theme in the Reagan rhetoric especially in the first two years, that went beyond condemnation and suggested not only that the United States would like to be in on the execution, but that the Soviet system might be rolled back right to the gates of the Kremlin itself."[112] Still, Reagan, although intolerant of communism, did follow in the rhetorical footsteps of previous Cold War presidents, espousing a need for negotiation even while condemning the Soviet Union. Reagan was certain communism could not survive, and negotiation would buy time for the Soviet system to collapse.

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[109] Ronald Reagan, "A Time for Choosing" (speech, Los Angeles, CA, October 17, 1964), American Rhetoric, http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/ronaldreaganatimeforchoosing.htm.
[110] Rowland and Jones, *Reagan at Westminster*, 32.
[111] Ibid., 33.
[112] Strobe Talbott, *The Russians and Reagan* (New York: Random, 1984): 74.

Reagan's presidential speech continued his established Soviet rhetoric, as well as utilized many of the same rhetorical strategies as his presidential predecessors: America needed to be aware of, and work to stop, communist expansion; democratic and communist systems and ideologies were inherently polarized through their antithetical structures; and through the matching of Soviet arms, the US could keep the Soviet Union "in check." When he proclaimed that the Soviet Union was an evil empire, he recalled decades of the strategic use of polarization; when he argued that there should be a military balance between the two superpowers, he drew on the arguments of Nixon, Ford and others; and when he reminded Americans of the insidious nature of communist expansion, Reagan conjured the language of Eisenhower. Often, presidential Cold War arguments were sources of invention for Reagan that he used to advance his contention that communism was an untenable system.

Reagan's first-term rhetoric was influenced by previous presidential Cold War rhetoric. In his second term, Reagan's rhetoric started changing; it became more hopeful and conciliatory. In large part, his rhetoric changed because Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev was leading the Soviet Union. Reagan saw Gorbachev as a different kind of Soviet leader from his communist predecessors.[113] When asked about his characterization of the Soviet Union as an "evil empire" ahead of the 1985 Geneva Summit with Gorbachev, Reagan said that both sides had called each names: "Yes, I used the term the "'evil empire,'" said Reagan, but the Soviets had called the US "'cannibals.'" Unlike in much of his previous Soviet rhetoric, Reagan seemed

[113] Ronald Reagan, "Farewell Address to the Nation," (speech, Washington, DC, January 11, 1989), *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29650.

ready to mend fences, saying, "I think both of us have stopped that language, thinking that we'll get farther at the meetings if we come together to try and eliminate the need for such talk."[114]

John M. Jones and Robert C. Rowland contend Reagan maintained a rhetorical duality regarding the Soviet Union through the end of his presidency. His rhetoric became more conciliatory even as he maintained a hardline stance against the Soviet system.[115] The pinnacle of this rhetorical duality was Reagan's May 31, 1988 address at Moscow State University in which he supported Gorbachev's social and political reforms while critiquing the Soviet system.[116]

A number of critics have commented on Reagan's rhetorical shift concerning the Soviet Union. Journalist David Ignatius contends that his first-term Soviet rhetoric made Reagan seem like "a warmonger," while his second term Soviet rhetoric made Reagan appear "a hypocrite."[117] Robert Wright argues that Reagan changed his Soviet rhetoric because "Mikhail Gorbachev had been winning global acclaim by talking peace. Reagan wanted some of the action."[118] A great many scholars contend that Reagan's changing Soviet rhetoric coincided with a shift in American rhetoric from the Soviet side, specifically from Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev.[119] There is considerable literature, then, that suggests it was Gorbachev's ascension

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[114] Ronald Reagan, "Interview With Foreign Broadcasters on the Upcoming Soviet- United States Summit Meeting in Geneva," November 12, 1985. , *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=38044.

[115] John M. Jones and Robert C. Rowland, "Reagan at Moscow State University: Consubstantiality Underlying Conflict," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 10, no. 1 (2007): 78; See, also, Rowland and Jones, "Reagan at the Brandenburg Gate: Moral Clarity Tempered by Pragmatism."

[116] John M. Jones and Robert C. Rowland, "Reagan at Moscow State University," 78-79.

[117] David Ignatius, "Reagan's Foreign Policy and the Rejection of Diplomacy," in *The Reagan Legacy* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), 176.

[118] Robert Wright, "TRB from Washington: Legacy? What legacy?," *The New Republic* 20, no. 2-3 (1989): 6, http://search.proquest.com.proxy2.library.illinois.edu/docview/212869552?accountid=14553.

[119] See Beth A. Fischer, *The Reagan Reversal: Foreign Policy and the End of the Cold War* (Columbia: University of Missouri, 1997); W. Barnett Pearce, Deborah K. Johnson, and Robert J. Branham, "A Rhetorical Ambush at Reykjavík: A Case Study of the Transformation of Discourse," in *Reagan and Public Discourse in America*

to Soviet leadership which facilitated Reagan's changing Soviet rhetoric. As Reagan played his part in facilitating the end of the Cold War, he purposefully and necessarily changed the way he characterized the Soviet Union. From that rhetorical change emerged the Soviet redemption narrative.

Reagan's Soviet rhetoric was clearly influenced by previous Cold War rhetoric. His pre-presidential and presidential oratory was decidedly anticommunist, and his arguments against communism most often relied on pathetic appeals to the danger of communism. His early presidential Cold War rhetoric may have been the most vitriolic, exaggerated, and damning language of any president since Truman. Reagan's Soviet rhetoric was squarely in line with other Cold War leaders: The US could curb Soviet aggression through the arms race while continuing to negotiate a somewhat peaceable coexistence with an insidious enemy bent on spreading a flawed ideology to the rest of the world. Reagan remained convinced that communism was evil and antithetical to democracy, but he found in Mikhail Gorbachev a different kind of Soviet leader. Gorbachev's willingness to change the way Soviet politics worked, and to engage in meaningful diplomatic discussions, paved the way for Reagan's cautiously hopeful new Cold War rhetoric. Reagan's long history of unwavering acerbic narratives about, and rhetoric toward, Western "enemies" makes how he negotiated his changing Soviet rhetoric a potentially important addition to the study of political rhetoric.

Chapters

I have organized this dissertation into five chapters. What follows is a preview of the remaining chapters. The second chapter is a general history of Reagan's political rhetoric from his time in the Screen Actors Guild through his time as Governor of California from 1967-1975.

(Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1992); and Lee Sigelman, "Disarming the Opposition: The President, the Public, and the INF Treaty," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (1990).

It demonstrates Reagan's rhetorical and political roots, as well as his history of using narrative as a rhetorical tool. Salient to this dissertation are the ways in which Reagan's pre-presidential Soviet rhetoric set a precedent for his first term in the Oval Office.

The third chapter is a rhetorical analysis of four of Reagan's first term speeches, each an exemplar of his typical Soviet rhetoric and the use of narrative to advance his political agenda. The analysis of these four speeches demonstrate Reagan's use of specific rhetorical strategies to undermine communism and the Soviet Union; to mark the flaws within Soviet/communist ideology, especially when compared to Western democratic ideology; and to tell the story of a heroic America, the shining city on a hill, engaged in a battle of ideals and principles with the Soviet Union, the "evil empire" casting its dark shadow across the world.

I analyze the following first-term speeches:

"Zero Option Address" (11/18/1981)

"Westminster Address" (6/8/1982)

"Address to the National Association of Evangelicals," or the "Evil Empire Address" (3/8/1983)

"Address to the Nation and Other Countries on US-Soviet Relations" (1/16/1984)

I chose these speeches because they reiterate and reify antecedent Cold War rhetoric from former presidents and Reagan. Such rhetoric was both a source of invention and the language upon which Reagan had built his image as an anti-communist. How Reagan talked about the Soviet Union in these speeches demonstrates his entrenched and seemingly unerring belief that the Soviet system was socially, politically, and ethically degenerate. They serve as a foil to, and help illustrate the magnitude of, his changing second-term Soviet rhetoric.

The fourth chapter is a rhetorical analysis of four of Reagan's second term speeches. The analysis of these four speeches demonstrate Reagan's changing Soviet rhetoric. I analyze the following second-term speeches:

"Geneva Address" (11/21/1985)

"Reykjavik Address" (10/13/1986)

"London Address" (6/3/1988)

"Farewell Address" (1/11/1989)

Although his Soviet rhetoric was still firmly anti-communist and Reagan did not shy away from challenging Soviet leadership on ideological and moral grounds,[120] his rhetoric became more conciliatory and optimistic about the future of US-Soviet relations. Reagan's characterization of the Soviet Union changed as he shifted his focus from the evils of ubiquitous "communism" to Gorbachev as synecdoche for political and social change in the USSR. Further, the speeches exhibit a departure from the President's narrative of the Soviet Union as an implacable foe of the United States to one in which the USSR was capable of change and "redemption" from its past "evil" ways.

Instead of individually analyzing each speech, I treat each set of four as a collective block. I demonstrate the common use of specific rhetorical strategies throughout each block but show the different ways Reagan used the strategies in each to create a narrative regarding the Soviet Union. What emerges is a concomitant change in Reagan's Soviet rhetoric and a demonstrable Soviet redemption narrative which moves from a story of irredeemable Soviet existence to a story of redeemable Soviet existence.

The dissertation's fifth chapter is the conclusion, and I discuss the implications of Reagan's changing Soviet rhetoric, how Reagan negotiated the change, the Soviet redemption

[120] See Reagan's June 12, 1987 "Remarks at the Brandenburg Gate" speech.

narrative's place in Reagan studies, possible future rhetorical studies at the intersection of narrative, politics, and the canon of a particular orator.

Conclusion

The transformation of Reagan's rhetoric is what energizes my study. No previous US president had changed their Soviet rhetoric in such a dramatic fashion. As with other Cold War presidents, Reagan's Soviet rhetoric changed with the ebb and flow of political and social changes, but his decades-long, ardent, anti-communism made his changing Soviet rhetoric unique in presidential history.

Ronald Reagan has been called "The Great Communicator," and the numerous works devoted to his rhetoric attest to that fact. There is ample literature that references Reagan's use of narrative in his rhetoric, and some of the Reagan literature notes that his Soviet rhetoric changed in the second term of his presidency, although none of it takes up how that change is part of a larger political story of possible Soviet redemption told by Reagan. A great deal of scholarly work focuses only on the long-standing consistency of his rhetoric and rarely takes into account the important aspect of his willingness to change his rhetoric, especially regarding the Soviet Union. Here, then, is a chance to address a lack in Reagan studies and shine a light on the way he employed narrative to alter, stretch, and redefine the decades-long contentious relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union even as his ideological dogma remained constant.

Chapter Two

Reagan's road to becoming "The Great Communicator" began, like his acting career, in Hollywood. Communism inspired the start of his public speaking career, and it was a prominent subject of his public address through the end of his presidency. From his time in the Screen Actors Guild as a board member and its president, to his testimony at the House Un-American Activities Committee, and through his term as Governor of California, the Red Menace found a home in his oratory. Reagan's pre-presidential Soviet rhetoric generally used the same strategies and tropes as most Cold War rhetoric: democracy and communism were inherently antithetical; vigilance against an insidious, encroaching Soviet government was mandatory; and matching Soviet military power would deter communist aggression.

In this chapter, I review a number of moments in Reagan's pre-presidential oratory, focusing on his Soviet rhetoric. This review establishes Reagan's position on communism generally and the Soviet Union specifically. The next chapter of this dissertation concerns itself with Reagan's first-term presidential Soviet rhetoric. By examining the ways in which he spoke of the Soviet Union, we gain an understanding of the foundation of Reagan's presidential Soviet rhetoric, and why, when Reagan's rhetoric began changing in his second presidential term, it was a significant event in his oratorical corpus. More generally, by examining the rhetorical strategies Reagan used to create and reinforce the image of the Soviet Union as a villainous actor on the world stage, we gain an understanding of the way large swaths of American citizens understood Soviet political and social actions.

One of the claims of this dissertation is that Reagan's changing presidential Soviet rhetoric tells a story of Soviet redemption. As such, understanding the communist position in Reagan's early rhetoric is integral to establishing the Soviet role as a global antagonist during the

Cold War. A brief examination of some of the important moments and events in US-Soviet Cold War history lends context to the constraints and opportunities Reagan encountered as he navigated public discussion of the Soviet Menace. The overarching purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate the ways that Reagan's pre-presidential Soviet rhetoric introduced and solidified rhetorical strategies he would eventually need both to retain and overcome during his presidency.

The Cold War was marked by sweeping changes in social and political life; events and actions like the nuclear arms race, Civil Rights Movement, Vietnam War, détente, and the rise of the Moral Majority served as a backdrop for Reagan's entrée into political life and his sustained prominence as a political actor. In the first twenty-five years of the Cold War, concern about the spread of communism was central to American foreign policy. How the US navigated interactions with the Soviet Union was foremost in Reagan's political thoughts. He seemed always concerned with how our democratic system matched-up against the Soviet system and what the US should do militarily or politically to counteract Soviet actions. It is through the lens of Reagan's preoccupation with encroaching communism that we see his interpretation of US-Soviet social and political relationships. A number of strategies recurred throughout Reagan's pre-presidential rhetoric. First, he often invoked the *ethos* of the citizen, or of the citizen-politician. Second, he relied on descriptions and discussions of the antithetical nature of communism to democracy, and it is in these instances where the prophetic dualism framework becomes clear in Reagan's rhetoric. Last, he a used a specific recurring analogy: the menace of Nazi totalitarianism reborn as Soviet communism.

This chapter proceeds in four parts: First, I offer a brief biography of Ronald Reagan. Second, I enumerate and elaborate on the three rhetorical strategies used to create his Soviet narrative. Third, I examine the way the three rhetorical strategies coalesced to create the Soviet

narrative, as well as offer an analysis of a single exemplar text in which the strategies appear. Last, I conclude the chapter with a review of the rhetorical strategies and a brief discussion of the importance of understanding how Reagan used those strategies in the context of the Cold War.

Biography

Ronald Reagan was born on February 6, 1911, in Tampico, Illinois. His father, Jack, was an alcoholic and salesman. Jack's alcoholism "made him an unreliable breadwinner"[121] who moved his family—mother Nelle, brother Neil, and Ronald—to a number of towns in Illinois before finally landing in Dixon, Illinois when Reagan was nine. Nelle was a deeply religious woman whom Reagan admired. She explained Jack's alcoholism as a sickness and encouraged "the boys' sympathy and understanding." Jack and Nelle were Democrats, and because of that, Ronald was as well and would be until he officially registered as a Republican in the early 1960s.

Reagan enjoyed growing up in Dixon, and he aspired to be an athlete of some kind, but he was generally poor at sports. Myopia contributed to his athletic failures, and when he finally got glasses, he was "taunted as 'Four-Eyes.'" Reagan often talked about how the memories of his athletic failures still stung many decades later.[122] While Four-Eyes may have been his initial nickname, Reagan came to be known by another—Dutch—which he got because of his childhood hairstyle. In high school, Reagan discovered that he played football well enough to make the school team, but it was on the stage that Reagan excelled. He had a fondness for writing and for acting.[123] After high school, Reagan attended Eureka College in Eureka, Illinois. He was a "C" student, preferring to concentrate on football and theater rather than on his classes.

Following graduation, Reagan went to Chicago looking for work as a radio broadcaster but did not find a job. He returned to Dixon briefly, then set out for Davenport, Iowa, where he

[121] H.W. Brands, *Reagan: the Life* (New York: Doubleday, 2015), 10.
[122] Ibid., 12.
[123] Ibid., 13-14.

landed a radio job as a sportscaster for college football games.[124] Later, he relocated to Des Moines, Iowa where he became a popular sportscaster. Radio was a fine job for Reagan, but he had higher aspirations. In 1937, when his radio station sent him to cover the Chicago Cubs spring training in Southern California, he took the chance to fulfill his "secret wish to break into movies."[125] He had a contact in Hollywood who got him an audition with Warner Brothers Studios. Reagan did not hear back from the studio before the Cubs broke camp, and so he headed back to Iowa, his dream unfulfilled. However, two days after he returned to Des Moines, he received a call from Warner Brothers and a seven year contract at $200 a week. In May of 1937, Reagan left Iowa for Hollywood.[126]

During his time in Hollywood, "Reagan made 52 films, beginning with *Love Is on The Air* in 1937,"[127] and ending with *The Killers* in 1964. Reagan acted in movies made in Warner Brothers's "B-division" until his turn as "doomed Notre Dame football star George Gipp in *Knute Rockne—All American*." After *Knute Rockne*, "Reagan was a feature film actor…receiving particularly good notices for a dramatic role in *Kings Row*." Although he was never a top-list star, he "earned a reputation as a capable actor who did his best work in light comedies."[128]

Reagan, the one-time staunch liberal, "joined every organization whose goal was to save the world"[129] when he first arrived in Hollywood. Two of those organizations, the Hollywood Independent Citizens Committee of Arts, Sciences and Professions, as well as a chapter of the American Veterans Committee, turned out to be fronts for Communist organizations. Reagan

[124] Ibid., 25-26
[125] Ibid., 35-36.
[126] Ibid., 37-39.
[127] Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, "Ronald Reagan, Life in Brief," accessed February 22, 2016, http://millercenter.org/president/biography/reagan-life-in-brief.
[128] Ibid.
[129] Reagan, *An American Life*, 106.

quit the American Veterans Committee immediately[130] and eventually resigned from the Hollywood Independent Citizens Committee of Arts, Sciences and Professions after an unsuccessful attempt to change its culture.[131] Where Reagan once believed "the orthodox liberal view that Communists—if there really *were* any—were liberals who were temporarily off track, and whatever they were, they didn't pose much of a threat to me or anyone," his experiences with communists in groups he belonged to changed his mind: "Now I knew from firsthand experience how Communists used, lies, deceit, violence, or any other tactic that suited them to advance the cause of Soviet expansion. I knew from the experience of hand-to-hand combat that America faced no more insidious or evil threat than that of Communism."[132] It was his position as the President of the Screen Actors Guild, to which he was elected in 1946, that attracted the attention of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) and facilitated his earliest, most prominent political appearance.

The Citizen's *Ethos*

Ethos played an important role in Reagan's rhetoric. In part, *ethos* is the persuasive power of the character of the speaker. *Ethos* "defines the space where language and truth meet or are made incarnate with the individual."[133] Language and the perceived character of the speaker are intertwined in such a way as to render them inextricable from one another. Reagan's *ethos* manifested itself specifically in his role as a citizen who spoke, not like a politician, but like a "regular" American; it was the citizen's *ethos*. He made uncomplicated language choices, built an everyman public persona largely from his many turns as an "all-American" man in the movies, and offered simple answers to difficult social and political questions. In Kenneth

[130] Lou Cannon, *Reagan* (New York: Putnam, 1982), 79.
[131] Ibid., 106.
[132] Reagan, *An American Life*, 115.
[133] James S. Baumlin, introduction to *Ethos: New Essays in Rhetorical and Critical Theory*., eds. James S. Baumlin and Tita French Baumlin (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1994), xiii.

Burke's words, Reagan understood that "you persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, identifying your ways with his."[134] Through his linguistic choices, Reagan constituted himself and his audience as prototypical Americans, and in doing so, formed a bond of authority and trust that manifested itself in the form of the citizen's *ethos*.

Reagan created a contested sense of citizenship by proposing a kind of binary concept of the citizen. There were two categories of citizenship: the citizenry and the politicians. Reagan successfully defined the sense of a binary citizen through dissociation. On one hand, there were the politicians, who, although citizens, were characterized as beholden to their careers and removed from their constituents' daily fight against communism. As such, the politician became an observer in the battle with communism in America. On the other hand was the citizenry. They were the true soldiers in America's crusade to turn back the red tide of communism expansion. Reagan's dissociation, in turn, created two kinds of *ethos*—one the politician's and one the citizen's. The politician's *ethos* is predicated on traditional norms of political authority, whereas the citizen's *ethos* is predicated on the citizenry engaging in political words and/or actions.

Successfully employing dissociation required more than creating the binary; Reagan had to demonstrate what it meant to be a part of the citizenry. He did so through rhetorical choices that allowed him to construct and perform the citizen's *ethos*. In a 1948 radio broadcast in which he stumped for Harry Truman, Reagan exemplified this approach: "This is Ronald Reagan speaking to you from Hollywood. You know me as a motion picture actor but tonight I'm just a citizen pretty concerned about the national election next month and more than a little impatient with those promises the Republicans made before they got control of Congress a couple of years

[134] Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 55.

ago."[135] Reagan acknowledged his unique position as an actor, but he emphasized his role as a citizen, just the same as the members of his audience. Reagan spoke as a citizen engaging in the important work of political action, and the purpose of the address was to encourage others follow his lead. In enacting what he encouraged, Reagan created a sense of *ethos* with the citizenry.

Reagan placed emphasis on the importance and duty of American citizens to work against communism at home. His pre-presidential rhetoric and his presidential rhetoric made great use of his image as an everyday American, creating a sense of communal heritage and shared values. His sincerity and fervor in defense of democratic ideals matched his identity as a proud American citizen. The convergence of rhetoric, persona, and character best explains Reagan's authority as a speaker, for "identity, voice, self, and authenticity [are] intrinsic to *ethos*."[136] B.L. Ware and Wil Linkugel note that the rhetorical persona is not the same as the person of the rhetor; they "draw a sharp distinction…between the rhetor's personal ethos and the ethos represented by the rhetorical *persona* the speaker assumes."[137] Reagan, however, not only blurred the line between rhetorical persona and the person of the rhetor, he eradicated it. He appeared authentic because there were no incongruities among Reagan's personage, rhetoric, and image.

Before his entrée into political office in the mid-1960s, Reagan regularly spoke about political issues, but he always presented himself as a citizen removed from the constraints of a politician. After he became a politician proper, he continued distancing himself from the title of politician, instead presenting himself as a citizen-politician. That is, he was always part of the

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[135] Ronald Reagan, "Reagan Campaigns for Truman in 1948," *YouTube* video, 4:13, July 21, 2007, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uJDhS4oUm0M.
[136] C. Jan Swearingen, "*Ethos*: Imitation, Impersonation, and Voice," in *Ethos: New Essays in Rhetorical and Critical Theory*., eds. James S. Baumlin and Tita French Baumlin (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1994), 115.
[137] B.L. Ware and Wil A. Linkugel, "The Rhetorical *Persona*: Marcus Garvey as Black Moses," *Communication Monographs* 49, no. 1 (1982): 51.

citizenry first and foremost and a politician second. Reagan claimed he spoke for "the forgotten American—that simple soul who goes to work, bucks for a raise, takes out insurance, pays for his kids' schooling, contributes to his church and charity and knows there just *ain't no such thing as a free lunch*."[138] Reagan's citizen and citizen-politician personae created a sense of identification and connection with an audience. The same citizen-politician persona Reagan presented at the end of his presidency was present at the start of his speaking career. In part, Reagan's *ethos* was linked to what he said and his public image; he gained "credibility" because his public image and rhetoric matched.[139] The more his words and image aligned, the more his audiences perceived him as a man of high character. Belief in the worthiness of his character was a powerful rhetorical advantage, for as Aristotle noted, character "may almost be called the most effective means of persuasion [a speaker] possesses."[140]

During the late 1940s into the 1950s, Reagan's nascent political ambition grew, but he rejected the mantle of the politico. Instead, Reagan performed role of a member of the citizenry, "consistently portray[ing] himself simply as a concerned citizen speaking his convictions."[141] His manner of speech reflected the same kind of uncomplicated qualities as his persona. For much of Reagan's early speaking career, he eschewed metaphors and similes because they might be misunderstood. Instead, Reagan "used examples, stories, and anecdotes," which turned "abstract concepts, such as freedom versus totalitarianism, into easily comprehensible, concrete terms," and he "offered uncomplicated answers to complicated political questions." Reagan's facile

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[138] Ronald Reagan, "The Republican Party and the Conservative Movement [Part III]," *National Review*, December 1964, 1055.
[139] Ann Chisholm, "Conventional Narrative as Rhetorical Strategy: Ronald Reagan's 'Address to the 1988 Republican national Convention,'" in *Critiques of Contemporary Rhetoric* 2nd ed., Eds. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Thomas R. Burkholder (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1997), 279.
[140] Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, Trans. W. Rhys Roberts (Minola, NY: Dover Publications, 2004): 1356a13-14.
[141] Kurt Ritter and David Henry, *Ronald Reagan, The Great Communicator* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992): 11.

treatment of complicated issues "aroused intense animosity as well as intense loyalty" among listeners, and as such, Reagan's rhetoric "was a two-edged sword" that "functioned as both an advantage and a disadvantage."[142]

His rhetorical and political successes over the course of four decades indicate that those advantages far outweighed any disadvantages such rhetoric might have wrought. In his role as a concerned citizen, Reagan cared about what was best for America, and such a position avoided the constraints and political baggage of "the politician" proper. The role of the concerned citizen, which would become the citizen-politician, was a simpler position for advancing his political interests. It also commanded an *ethos* unique from professional politicians. Politicians in Washington were charged with balancing what was good for the country with what was good for their careers; thus their words and actions were always somewhat suspect. They had split allegiances, so to speak, whereas the citizen-politician had no such restrictions. In short, the citizenry and the citizen's *ethos* were coded in a way that concretized the differences between the citizenry and the politicians, clearly assigning primacy to the work of the citizenry.

Communist encroachment across the globe was a subject that Reagan believed should concern American citizens because it threatened to undermine democracy generally and American democracy specifically. Much to America's horror and consternation, the Soviet Union created satellite states of formerly independent countries at the end of World War II and in the years after, including Albania, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and East Germany. It was in this atmosphere of communist expansion and growing alarm at the ever-increasing Soviet sphere of influence that Reagan began his speaking career. With his acting career waning, Reagan was increasingly involved with the Hollywood guilds and clubs. The anti-

[142] Mary Stuckey, *Getting Into the Game: The Pre-Presidential Rhetoric of Ronald Reagan* (New York: Praeger, 1989): 15.

communist charge of the future president's rhetoric found its purchase in his Hollywood days, and it was after World War II that Reagan first recognized his fear of a growing communist threat.

For Reagan, fear that communism was seeping into the fabric of American life was real and prevalent. Citizens were asked to watch out for signs of communism in their neighbors and local organizations. Reagan not only kept a watchful eye for signs of communism, he spoke about communism and the dangers it presented to American citizens. Reagan's experience recognizing and fighting communists in various Hollywood clubs and guilds afforded him the authority to speak on the matter of communist encroachment. Such *ethos* served him well as he spoke out against both fascists and communists, arguing that both "posed a threat to American values"[143] and to the safety and prosperity of America.

Reagan was a Hollywood actor, and although he held a position of relative power and fame in the public eye, he was nonetheless not a politician, and as such, he generated a kind *ethos* unavailable to politicians. Thinking and speaking about the dangers of communism was part and parcel of a politician's daily concerns, but it was unique in the citizen's everyday life. This uniqueness lent an air of earnestness and *ethos* to those citizens who spoke about the danger of communism, specifically because it was not the citizen's "job" to speak on political matters. The citizen's motives are, in this sense, purer than the politician's. Reagan matched his role as a citizen-politician to an everyman persona to create the impression of a "straight-shooter."

The citizen's *ethos* was apparent in Reagan's 1947 testimony to the HUAC. Reagan declared that the members of the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) "exposed [communist] lies" and "opposed their propaganda." In a one sense, the members of SAG, as ordinary citizens, represented the common American citizen. They were successful at detecting and uncovering

[143] Reagan, *An American Life*, 106.

communist influences among their group. Further, noted Reagan, those citizens were "eminently successful in preventing [communists] from, with their usual tactics, trying to run a majority of an organization with a well-organized minority."[144] The communists attempted to replicate the Soviet system wherein a minority rules the majority, but the citizenry rooted out and defeated the communist incursion. Patriotic members of SAG were characterized as knowledgeable about communist methods for securing leadership in guilds and unions. Through his testimony, Reagan demonstrated the intelligence and wisdom of citizens as well as their ability to beat back communism before it can take hold. Reagan's testimony made it clear that the citizen was an effective agent in the war against encroaching communism. In this and future oratory, Reagan's experience as a citizen who successfully combated communism granted him *ethos*, in part because he had engaged communism and won the day, and in part because his audiences recognized that they had the same ability and authority to resist communist encroachment.

Political tension between the West and the countries in the Soviet sphere of influence was high throughout the Cold War; it is not surprising that Reagan's speeches, regardless of subject matter, often revolved around the context of communism or the Communist Menace,[145] and his "goal seems to have been reaffirmation and purification of America and the American dream." In large part, his pre-presidential rhetoric "relie[d] predominately upon simplistic and accessible rhetoric to convey his message of the Communist threat to the American way of life while appearing calm and reasonable."[146] Although critics questioned his authority as a political speaker, Reagan's history as an actor was not a detriment to his political aspirations, because he

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[144] Ronald Reagan, "HUAC testimony transcript, interview by Robert E. Stripling," October 23, 1947, accessed May 6, 2016, http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6458/https://archive.org/stream/hearingsregardin1947aunit/hearingsregardin1947aunit_djvu.txt, page.

[145] Stuckey, *Getting Into the Game*, 11.

[146] Ibid., 17.

used the role of the citizen to create authority. He often accomplished this "by discussing the attempted Communist takeover of Hollywood,"[147] thus demonstrating his authority in the matter of understanding the communist threat.

Reagan called "the ideological struggle with Russia...the number one problem in the world." The ideological struggle was complex and multi-faceted, but Reagan's rhetoric distilled those complexities and facets into the struggle of good versus evil. "The inescapable truth," said Reagan, "is that we are at war, and we are losing that war simply because we don't, or won't, realize that we are in it." The war was a "strange" one "fought without the usual weapons." Reagan admonished his audience not to "yell foul, because it is declared war," even if it did not look like a traditional one. He argued that Karl Marx long ago set down the communist principles that created what could only ever be a combative relationship with capitalism, and that the Soviets would attempt to destroy our system, on the ruins of which "the world Communist state [would] be erected."[148] In order to avoid a world dominated by the Soviet state, Americans had to be aware of how and why democracy and communism were antithetical to one another, and recognizing that, oppose it at every turn.

Although he has a well-deserved reputation as a staunch anti-communist, Reagan was not single-minded, and he did not subscribe to unquestioning red-baiting. Unlike many of the HUAC members, Reagan's distrust and dislike of communism did not consume his good sense. Reagan admitted, often in disgust, that communists had indeed made it into the ranks of a number of Hollywood guilds and unions, but he was also not blind to the fact that during the Red Scare and the rise of Joseph McCarthy, that "many fine people were accused wrongly of being Communists

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[147] Ibid., 10.

[148] Ronald Reagan, "Encroaching Control," *Vital Speeches of the Day* 27, no. 22 (September 1961): 677. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCO*host*.

simply because they were liberals."[149] Reagan would spend his speaking career defaming communism, but he also understood the danger of labeling people communists in America. Reagan defended union film workers unrightfully accused of being communists[150] because such a stigmatizing label ruined careers and lives. A decade later, while bemoaning the high taxes on low and middle class film industry workers,[151]Reagan discussed how the people of the "patriotic" film industry fought back against a Communist Party which sought to gain control of Hollywood and the messages in its films.[152]

The future president was unwilling to call out those he could not confirm as communists because he did not want to stigmatize those people, and because he believed that communism would not thrive in democratic America. Democracy was a transcendent political force. Certainly the American people had to remain aware of the dangers of communism, but democracy was such an inherently superior system to communism that there was (theoretically) little that communists could do to force their ideology onto a democratic society if its people were watchful. In fact, during the HUAC proceedings, Reagan testified that he did not think the Communist Party should be outlawed because informed Americans would denounce and turn from communism on their own.[153]

Prophetic Dualism

In part, Reagan crafted his citizen persona by speaking of issues that resonated with middle-class Americans. Throughout his speaking career, "the most salient features of Reagan's

[149] Reagan, *An American Life*, 114.
[150] Reagan, HUAC testimony.
[151] Ronald Reagan, "House Way and Means Committee: January 27, 1958," in *Actor*, *Ideologue*, *Politician: The Public Speeches of Ronald Reagan*, eds. Davis W. Houck and Amos Kiewe (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992), 15.
[152] Reagan, "House Way and Means Committee: January 27, 1958," 14-15.; See also, Ronald Reagan, "Business, Ballots, and Bureaus," in *Actor*, *Ideologue*, *Politician: The Public Speeches of Ronald Reagan*, eds. Davis W. Houck and Amos Kiewe (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992), 18-19.
[153] Reagan HUAC testimony.

rhetoric" were "unself-conscious references to God, emphasis on heroes, [and] appeals to values of freedom and progress."[154] These features fit nicely into Reagan's long-standing use of the prophetic dualism frame as one of his main rhetorical strategies. As noted in the chapter one, prophetic dualism works on the principle of polarization. The US and Soviet Union were engaged in an extended conflict in which Reagan clearly delineated the good (the US) from the evil (the Soviet Union). He characterized the American people and its democratic system as "good, decent, and at one with God's will"; in opposition stood the Soviet communist system. There was no real chance at friendship or reconciliation between the superpowers because the Soviet system was inherently flawed. The US and Soviet Union were engaged in a war of ideologies, and Reagan reminded America that "there can only be one end to the war we are in. It won't go away….Wars end in victory or defeat."[155] Communism fostered the rule of the few over the many, and its leaders would not allow the Soviet people the freedom to choose what worked best for their lives, or whom might govern them, and as such, communism was a maladaptive system of governance. Where "religious faith, moral insight,…[and] respect for the laws of God" molded the virtues of American democracy and directed its domestic and foreign actions, Soviet communism was atheistic, immoral, and bent to the will of a corrupt few. The attributes of communism were directly antithetical to American democracy, and Reagan believed that Americans should oppose communism and all of its tenets. Reagan's rhetoric reflected his beliefs and often used the prophetic dualism frame to emphasize the deep ideological chasm between the two systems of government.[156]

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[154] Ritter and Henry, 4.
[155] Reagan, "Encroaching Control," 681.
[156] Philip Wander, "The Rhetoric of American Foreign Policy," in *Cold War Rhetoric: Strategy, Metaphor, and Ideology*, Robert Ivie and Martin J. Medhurst and Robert Scott and Philip Wander et. al. (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1997), 157.

Starting with his early Soviet rhetoric, Reagan used a prophetic dualism frame when he discussed US-Soviet relations. Reagan's Soviet rhetoric "divide[d] the world into two camps": democracies and communist states broadly, and the US and USSR specifically. The great conflict between them resulted from a clash of ideologies. American democracy was "in accord with all that is good, decent, and at one with God's will," while Soviet communism was "in direct opposition." Communists were the antagonists, while democracies were the protagonists. There could be no middle ground, no compromise,[157] in the conflict between communism and democracy because communists represented and endorsed anti-religion and anti-freewill. As Reagan began his foray into politics, he established an anti-communist stance that carried through his presidency. Reagan's early speeches were marked by "connection[s] between the Judeo-Christian religion and the United States' past, present, and future"[158] and were filled with praise for individualism and condemnation for its antithesis, totalitarianism. God looked favorably upon America's history of individualism, while evil forces ruled the nefarious "isms" like communism.[159]

Reagan spoke about myriad issues in his pre-presidential rhetoric, but the topic of communism was always close-at-hand. Much of Reagan's pre-presidential oratory incorporated popular Soviet rhetoric of the time: The necessity of vigilance in the face of communist expansion; the polarized state of communist and democratic ideologies; and the need to match Soviet military production. He was staunchly anti-communist, and he made no effort to hide his opinions. Public perception of Reagan's Soviet rhetoric is that it was always vitriolic. However, Reagan was politically shrewd, and during the early years of his speechmaking career, how much

[157] Ibid.,
[158] David W. Houck and Amos Kiewe, *Actor*, *Ideologue*, *Politician: The Public Speeches of Ronald Reagan*, eds. Davis W. Houck and Amos Kiewe (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992): 1.
[159] Ibid., 2.

and often he spoke about the "Communist Menace" was determined by his audience. Audiences that were politically right-leaning heard far more passionate denunciations of communism than did moderate or left-of-center audiences.[160]

More than antithetical to democracy, Reagan argued that communism was an "evil force," and the US and the Soviet Union were in an ideological battle between "those who believe in the sanctity of individual freedom and those who believe in the supremacy of the state."[161] Using the prophetic dualism frame allowed Reagan to delineate why the US and USSR could never find a true middle ground: there was no compromise with evil. Thus communism should not, and could not, thrive in America. Through vigilance and opposition, Americans could turn away communism from their land. Americans would be called on to oppose communism anywhere in the world, and not solely because the US wanted to contain its expansion, but because if communism was evil, and Democracy was good, then democratic societies had an obligation to defend other states from the malevolence of communism.

Polarization allowed Reagan to use communism as a foil in many speeches covering myriad subjects, not only in orations specifically written to bring about a comparison of democratic and communist systems. In many ways, polarization, or prophetic dualism, was the one thread that ran through the fabric of all of Reagan's rhetorical invention. When Reagan engaged in narrative-making, the undergirding structure of the story was normally the stark differences between the US and the Soviet Union. For example, in an income tax speech to the House Ways and Means Committee, he told the story of a "Polish Minister of Education" who objected to American "propaganda" in a movie—that "'factory workers in America'" drove the

[160] Ibid., 3.
[161] Ronald Reagan, "Your America To Be Free" (speech, Eureka, IL, June 7, 1957), Reagan2020, http://reagan2020.us/speeches/Your_America_to_be_Free.asp.

cars shown in a parking lot scene.[162] So different was the Pole's reality from American reality, he did not believe the movie was truthful. The differences between a democratic society and a communist society played themselves out, not only on a grand, ideological scale, but in smaller ways, such as access to affordable personal transportation. Narrative not only showed the differences between the two superpowers, but acted as evidence of the superiority of democracy. That which Americans took for granted, like the freedom and luxury for citizens to own cars, was unheard of in countries dominated by communism.

In a May, 1959 speech, Reagan argued that communism was a threat to America, but that socialist and communist threats were "not all external."[163] The US government was overreaching its position and forcing unwanted social and political programs on Americans. Such actions were communistic and played into Soviet desires. Reagan stated that the turn toward socialism was apparent enough that Nikita Khrushchev, the First Secretary of the Communist Party, predicted that by 1960, the US would be a socialist country.[164] A socialist America meant the end of America's "free enterprise Democracy," which Reagan called "the greatest system ever evolved by man."[165] The sentiment of Reagan's oratory was that the American system was superior to other systems, and that becoming a socialist or communist country was to accept a lesser system for the American people. Once again, communism threatened the American way of life. Communism was devious in its ability to undermine democracy; thus, Americans needed to be made aware of the threat, and they needed to remain vigilant in its presence.

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[162] Ronald Reagan, "House Way and Means Committee: January 27, 1958," 14.
[163] Ronald Reagan, "Business, Ballots, and Bureaus: May 6, 1959," 19.
[164] Ibid.; See also, Ronald Reagan, "Television Address: November 4, 1962," in *Actor*, *Ideologue*, *Politician: The Public Speeches of Ronald Reagan*, eds. Davis W. Houck and Amos Kiewe (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992).
[165] Ronald Reagan, "Business, Ballots, and Bureaus: May 6, 1959," 25.

In 1966, Reagan entered the California gubernatorial race, and the subject of communism found its way into many of his speeches. Unlike Goldwater, Reagan "spoke carefully, and his words conveyed the image of a reasonable man remaining calm in the face of a crisis rather than that of a man unreasonably excited."[166] Reagan's constant use of communism to describe the woes and threats of the world might easily be dismissed as the ranting of a paranoid politician, but because of the apparent reasonableness of his rhetoric, he appeared to be "a serious man, seriously discussing an immense and misunderstood threat."[167] He "adopted a pragmatic political persona emphasizing problem solving at the expense of ideology."[168] He did not abandon his ideological roots, but instead integrated his pragmatic self into his rhetorical being, and both ideology and pragmatism shared space "in the same speech" during his time as California's governor.[169] Despite questions regarding his ability to govern and the seeming detriment of being a former actor, the charming, affable Reagan won the California governorship by nearly a million votes[170]

From the start of his governorship, Reagan attempted to unite a fractured California Republican Party. For Reagan, "Republican unity" was "a moral as well as pragmatic imperative" because republicanism combated liberalism, and liberalism led to socialism, which eventually led to communism. That slippery slope argument was rooted in the "the *locus* of the irreparable," what Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca defined as an "irreparable event" that "is a source of terror for man; to be irreparable, an action must be one that cannot be repeated; it

[166] Stuckey, *Getting Into the Game*, 13.
[167] Ibid., 16.
[168] Houck and Kiewe, 37.
[169] Ibid.
[170] Brands, *Reagan: The Life*, 152.

acquires a value by the very fact of being considered under this aspect."[171] In Reagan's Soviet narrative, the irreparable event was a turn toward liberalism, because once America started down the path toward communism, it could not go back. Such was the nature of communism that once it took root in a country, it was difficult to uproot. Reagan brought "attention to the *unique* and *precarious* nature"[172] of a political moment in which Americans might fall prey to the machinations of communism via liberalism. As such, the Republican Party, the party which had not been "duped" by communists, needed to be elected in order to protect Americans from the communist threat.[173] The spirit of republicanism embodied in democracy held the power to transcend differences in political agendas. Reagan had long argued that democracy was a kind of transcendent force on a global level, but he also believed that it had the power to bridge differences on a domestic level. Reagan said as much at the close of "A Time for Choosing": "You and I have a rendezvous with destiny. We'll preserve for our children this, the last best hope of man on earth, or we'll sentence them to take the last step into a thousand years of darkness." Preserving a democratic America could save the world from Soviet communism. America's best hope of doing so started at the national level with the election of conservative Republican Barry Goldwater to the presidency, for Goldwater, claimed Reagan, "has faith that you and I have the ability and the dignity and the right to make our own decisions and determine our own destiny."[174] Thus, a vote for Goldwater was a vote for choosing the destiny of the country and the world.

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[171] Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969): 92.
[172] Robert Cox, "The Die is Cast: Topical and Ontological Dimensions of the Locus of the Irreparable," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 68, no. 3 (1982): 230.
[173] Stuckey, 11.
[174] Ronald Reagan, "A Time for Choosing" (speech, Los Angeles, CA, October 17, 1964), American Rhetoric, http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/ronaldreaganatimeforchoosing.htm.

During his first term as California governor, Reagan was seen as "a winner."[175] He toned down his anti-communist, anti-Washington rhetoric, and instead affirmed "the essential goodness of America," which helped "[establish]…an aura of competent authority" and made "him appear less radical and extremist."[176] During this time, Reagan "relied more heavily on statistics" than he had in earlier years, which "helped provide the image of a man in control of both facts and himself."[177] Nonetheless, Reagan's characterization of communism was always negative when juxtaposed against his characterization of democracy.

Although Reagan negotiated a small shift in his political rhetoric during his years as governor, his belief that communism unfairly put the power to dictate to the majority in the hands of the minority, remained strong. Reagan was nothing if not consistent; even in speeches concerning domestic matters, he espoused such a view. As governor, Reagan denounced student protestors at Berkeley, and later said of the situation:

> The vast majority of the students only wanted an education. But for months they were robbed of it by the rampaging of a minority; meanwhile, many moderate voices on the faculty were silenced by the intimidation of left-wing professors whose vision of freedom of speech was limited to speech about things they agreed with. I campaigned for the governorship by saying the campus rioters should "obey the rules or get out," and that was the policy I applied when I became governor.[178]

The Berkeley protests were domestic examples of a minority of people attempting to impose their will upon a majority. If the protestors were not communists, their actions held the same spirit as that of the Soviet system.

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[175] Stuckey, 34.
[176] Ibid., 33.
[177] Ibid., 39.
[178] Reagan, *An American Life*, 181.

As governor of California, Reagan spoke about national politics as well as state politics. At the American Legion Convention in 1972, Reagan argued against slashing defense spending, maintaining that American military superiority was a tool to preserve US moral superiority over totalitarian systems like communism. After World War II, said Reagan, "We dismantled our forces so fast that a Communist aggressor was encouraged to try to breach the defense perimeter of the free world in Korea."[179] The veracity of the containment theory was beyond reproach for Reagan, who saw the Korean War as a testament to the danger of Communist governments to their neighbors. Reagan contended that a growing number of younger Americans wanted to shrink the military and "believe the system [the free market and military] has failed," an idea that Reagan refuted by telling the story of a "woman who fled from Poland seeking sanctuary in the U.S." and enjoyed the freedom of uncensored faith, politics and communication granted by the American system.[180] Further proof of the greatness of the American system in relation to Soviet communism came from a German who said, "'America saved my people from starvation not so very long ago,'" as well as "'the fate of our neighbors, the Czechs who are the victims of imperialism."[181] In the speech, the well-used message that Americans were "good" and that communists were "bad" appeared again. The prophetic dualism frame reinforced Reagan's argument that Americans were saviors and that their democratic system was far superior to the Soviet system. The narratives attributed to two people from countries under Soviet threat and controls were evidence of the veracity of Reagan's claims to the goodness of the American political system. Those narratives of experience, although anecdotal, held more authority in the

[179] Ronald Reagan, "American Legion Convention: June 22, 1972," in *Actor*, *Ideologue*, *Politician: The Public Speeches of Ronald Reagan*, eds. Davis W. Houck and Amos Kiewe (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992), 113.
[180] Ibid., 116-117.
[181] Ibid., 117.

debate about the goodness of the US political system than did the opinion of those who simply "believed" it was not good.

Reagan's use of the prophetic dualism frame as a rhetorical strategy was far-reaching; it was perhaps his most commonly used rhetorical strategy. By offering a polarized account of the US and USSR government systems, Reagan guaranteed that the America of his oratory was a virtuous America, one devoted to the ideals of goodness, individual liberty, and moral righteousness. In Reagan's political narrative, America was a global hero, and the Soviet Union was a malevolent, totalitarian, and immoral villain. He accomplished that through employing a prophetic dualism frame that always presented the conflict between the US and the Soviet Union as an unambiguous, untenable conflict between good and evil.

Analogy

One of Reagan's rhetorical strategies in his pre-presidential rhetoric was to present a picture of communism as a universal evil, and the most prominent propagator of that brand of evil was the Soviet Union. In Reagan's narrative, the Soviets were the Bad Guys. With World War II fresh in people's minds, being the Bad Guy carried a distinct stigma. Before World War II, a country might be negatively judged for its actions on the world stage, but Hitler and the Nazis had perpetrated atrocities that called for far more than political scolding; they had committed actions that called for complete condemnation. Perhaps unfairly, Reagan presented communism as analogous to Nazism, and in turn, placed the Soviet Union in the same sphere of wickedness as Nazi Germany. Reagan's insistence on a Soviet/Nazi analogy was effective because, as Kenneth Burke tells us, analogy allows an audience to "[bring] out the thisness of a that, or the thatness of a this,….And to consider A from the point of view of B, is of course, to

use B as a perspective upon A."[182] Even if an audience was hesitant to go so far as to place the Soviets and the Nazis in the same sphere of evil, historical analogies still had the power to "trigger emotional, even subconscious associations."[183] In Reagan's estimation, the defeat of one of history's most oppressive, malignant, immoral villains created a void in the place where the Nazis once resided, and according to Reagan's rhetoric, the Soviets filled that void.

Reagan's very early public speech was relatively sporadic in terms of frequency; however, that changed in the mid-1950s. From 1954 to 1962, Reagan hosted the *General Electric Theater* television program. Part of his job was to travel to various General Electric plants and give speeches to the workers, which gave him a platform to practice his public speaking skills. These speeches—by one estimate, over 9,000[184]—directed at conservative blue-collar workers, helped shift his political views "from those of a New Deal Democrat to those of a conservative Republican."[185] Reagan's changing political affiliation was seen in his campaigns for Eisenhower in 1952 and 1956, and for Nixon in 1960. However, he did not officially register as a Republican until 1962.[186] In part, the change was fostered by what Reagan held was a shift in "classic 'liberal'" beliefs that "individuals should be the masters of their own destiny and the least government is the best government" to a new kind of liberal who "claimed government had a greater wisdom than individuals to determine what was best for the individual."[187] That new liberal ideology edged too close to communism.

In Reagan's estimation, the communist threat was twofold, "both external, requiring strong military defenses, and internal, requiring limits on the power of the government in

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[182] Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (New York; Prentice-Hall, 1952): 503-04.
[183] David Hoogland Noon, "Operation Enduring Analogy: World War II, the War on Terror, and the Uses of Historical Memory," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 7, no. 3 (Fall 2004): 339-365. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCO*host*.
[184] Ritter and Henry, 14.
[185] Ibid., 6.
[186] Reagan, *An American Life*, 136.
[187] Ibid., 135.

Washington."[188] For Reagan, communism represented a form of totalitarianism little different than Nazism, and the core of Reagan's arguments against communism, and all totalitarian government systems, were his belief in individual liberty and the right to make decisions for oneself. That was a constitutive quality of America—one that bridged natural differences between Americans of all stripes and bound US citizens together in the face of communism. Reagan expressed this belief during a June 1952 commencement address at William Woods College. He declared that America was "less of a place than an idea," and that that idea was "nothing but the inherent love of freedom in each one of us." Americans recognized the fight for individual liberty and choice as "the same old battle" against "Hitlerism," "Kaiserism," and now, communism.[189] The communists were analogous to Nazis, and Reagan called for his audience to oppose communism lest the Soviets perpetrate the same kind of outrages as did the Nazis. The same argument appears throughout Reagan's career, even when seemingly out of place, in part because just the mention of Nazism brought to mind a slew of negative thoughts and impressions. In fact, this commencement address was an incongruous moment in terms of "situation and the speech" because it was a "highly patriotic, Fourth of July speech to a group of graduating seniors in the month of June."[190] Still, Reagan believed that the importance of establishing or reinforcing the antithetical and dangerous nature of Soviet communism to American democracy justified the message and tone of the address. By equating communism and Nazism, Reagan set the Soviet Union against the United States, communism against democracy.

By 1964, Reagan was a popular conservative speaker who communicated the values of the middle and business classes. As the 1964 presidential campaign started to wind down,

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[188] Stuckey, 12.
[189] Ronald Reagan, "America the Beautiful," in *Actor, Ideologue, Politician: The Public Speeches of Ronald Reagan*, eds. Davis W. Houck and Amos Kiewe (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992), 5.
[190] Houck and Kiewe, 1.

Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater asked Reagan to campaign for him during a television program in October. Reagan agreed, and although he spoke at length about a number of topics, the subject of communism was prominent. In "A Time for Choosing," perhaps his most famous pre-presidential speech, Reagan urged America to fight against communist encroachment: "We're at war with the most dangerous enemy that has ever faced mankind in his long climb from the swamp to the stars, and it's been said if we lose that war, and in so doing lose this way of freedom of ours, history will record with the greatest astonishment that those who had the most to lose did the least to prevent its happening." Reagan's alliterative comment tapped into metaphorical imagery to emphasize the great danger of communism. To say that throughout the history of humankind, that the Soviets constituted the greatest threat to humanity was a thoroughly unambiguous statement. For a society that recently emerged from a conflict in which the Nazis committed atrocities on a level never seen before, Reagan's statement underscored the seriousness of the communist threat. There were some who would give in to the communist peril out of fear of war, but Reagan insisted that to live in communism was to relinquish the freedoms of democracy; that price was too high: "You and I know and do not believe that life is so dear and peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery."[191]

Taking a page from the playbooks of Cold War presidents, Reagan argued that America needed to keep pace with Soviet military expansion because to fall behind was to encourage communist aggressors. Reagan claimed that a strong military was vital to not only keeping communist encroachment at bay, but for driving it from countries across the globe. He argued that those who sought to appease the Soviet Union or any communist state were wrong-headed and weakened America's military advantage. Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev believed that

[191] Ronald Reagan, "A Time for Choosing" (speech, Los Angeles, CA, October 17, 1964), American Rhetoric, http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/ronaldreaganatimeforchoosing.htm.

Americans would eventually bow to communist pressure, claimed Reagan: "He believes this because from our side he's heard voices pleading for 'peace at any price' and 'better Red than dead.' Or as one commentator put it, he would rather 'Live on his knees than die on his feet.' And therein lies the road to war, because those voices don't speak for the rest of us." The path of appeasement led to defeat. Being vigilant and not backing away from the challenges of the Soviet Union brought "risk," said Reagan, "but every lesson of history tells us that the greater risk lies in appeasement, and this is what the specter our well-meaning liberal friends refuse to face."[192] His audience could not deny that appeasement had been an enormous failure of humanity in World War II. Reagan was both warning his audience that some Americans had forgotten to what appeasement leads, as well the importance of making heard the voices of those who would not knuckle under to communism. Reagan's rhetoric was enthymematic: If appeasement led to Nazi atrocities, and the Soviets were analogous to Nazis, then engaging in a policy of appeasement with the Soviets would lead to Soviet atrocities.

Reagan's message struck a chord with his audience; the speech was an immediate and enormous hit, and it "raised $600,000…for the struggling senator's campaign."[193] He "garnered both national attention and national conservative appeal,"[194] and shortly after Goldwater lost the election, "the first Reagan for President Committee was formed."[195] The television speech catapulted Reagan into the national political spotlight. "A Time for Choosing" was one of Reagan's landmark rhetorical moments, in no small part because he tapped into the fears and concerns of his audience, including his argument that communism was an analog system to Nazism. The analogy provided a clear picture of the possibilities of unchecked communist

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[192] Ibid.
[193] Marty Cohen, David Karol, Hans Noel, and John Zaller, *The Party Decides: Presidential Nominations Before and After Reform* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 192.
[194] Stuckey, 8-9.
[195] Ibid., 9.

expansion and prevalence in the world, and in turn, solidified the Soviet Union as the preeminent villain on the world stage.

Ethos, Prophetic Dualism, and Analogy in Concert

Reagan was able to create and sustain the narrative of the irredeemable Soviet Union because he skillfully integrated the rhetorical strategies of *ethos*, prophetic dualism, and analogy into a coherent story of Soviet misdeeds, immorality, and inhumanity. His citizen's *ethos* provided him the authority to speak about the Russian danger because he was both a citizen who appeared politically involved solely for the purpose of protecting the interests of the United States and because he had first-hand experience confronting communism as a citizen. Later, Reagan enjoyed the politician's *ethos*, although he couched his political career in the role of the true citizen-politician. In his roles as citizen and citizen politician, Reagan portrayed himself as an ordinary American fighting against a communist system that actively worked to undermine and eradicate the American ideals of liberty, freedom, and the pursuit of happiness, not just at home but abroad.

A communist victory anywhere was an American defeat, so Reagan emphasized the differences between Soviet communism and American democracy. He called for American vigilance in the face of encroaching communism. His main points of reference in the battle between democracy and communism fit squarely in the prophetic dualism frame. Thus, Reagan, the vigilant American citizen, repeatedly returned to the differences between the Soviet and American systems. The US was a divine creation, inspired by God and charged with doing God's work; the Soviets were godless bureaucrats using immoral tactics to force their system of government on hapless peoples across the globe. Communism, exhorted by the malevolent agents of the Politburo, was a force of evil, and as the benevolent sword of freedom, the US was

charged with combatting communism wherever it tried to take root. There could be no compromise on that point, for good could not silently live side-by-side with evil.

In World War II, Reagan had seen what happened when good countries attempted to coexist with evil. A policy of appeasement had opened the floodgates of Nazi expansion, and in its wake, millions of innocent people had died and whole countries were brought under the totalitarian rule of Adolf Hitler. In Soviet communism, Reagan saw the same danger and malevolence as German Nazism. The story of the Nazis was one of heartbreak, despotism, and irredeemable evil, and in Reagan's narrative, the Soviets had taken over that role.

In Reagan's pre-presidential Soviet rhetoric, *ethos*, prophetic dualism, and analogy were inextricably linked. It was only through his role as citizen-politician and experience that Reagan garnered the *ethos* to speak as an authority on the danger presented by an immoral, anti-democratic, Soviet Union unchecked by the forces of a munificent American good. Such a force had to oppose the spread of Soviet communism lest the world suffer a repeat of the Nazi atrocities of World War II. Over the course of years, Reagan's three rhetorical strategies coalesced to create the narrative of the unredeemable Soviet Union.

It is worthwhile, then, to examine how the themes of *ethos*, prophetic dualism, and analogy came together in a single address. After he left office, Reagan remained in the political spotlight, and he was on the campaign trail seeking the Republican presidential nomination for the 1976 election when he gave his televised "To Restore America" address. The speech was a denunciation of then-President Gerald Ford's domestic and foreign policies as well as a critique of the current climate of Washington, D.C. politics. The speech put the Ford campaign on its heels, and generated "$1.25 million in contributions" to Reagan's campaign coffers.[196] The first half of the speech was devoted to domestic affairs and the second half to foreign issues,

[196] Ritter and Henry, 48.

including the dangers posed by the Soviet Union and their expansionist principles. Reagan was clear that the Soviets were the premier threat in the world and were engaging in unsavory, undemocratic, and immoral activities. "To Restore America" brought together Reagan's prominent pre-presidential rhetorical themes and stands as an exemplar of how he used those themes to create a narrative of the Cold War, villainous, Soviets.

Reagan established his place as a citizen engaging in politics for the good of the nation and the *ethos* that comes with that role early in the speech. He addressed the audience humbly, saying, "I'd like to talk to you about issues" that should be important in a "primary election season."[197] Although he was a candidate for the presidential nomination, Reagan did not approach his audience as a politician but as a fellow citizen who wanted to have a conversation about issues that were important to everyone, not just Republicans but "Independents and Democrats…because the problems facing our country are problems that just don't bear any party label." Reagan identified himself as part of his audience and disassociated himself from President Ford and other Washington politicians in order to create a sense of shared values and trust. As part of Reagan's effort to associate himself with "common" Americans, he positioned himself and his fellow citizens against "the Washington Establishment." Reagan admonished Congress for giving themselves "a pay increase…every time the cost of living" increased, shielding themselves from the effects of inflation. "Washington doesn't feel the same pain from inflation that you and I do," said Reagan. He would appreciate "some arrangement like that for the rest of us." Reagan's rhetoric built both confidence and authority by creating a sense of unity with his audience.

[197] Ronald Reagan, "To Restore America" (speech, California, March 31, 1976), https://reaganlibrary.archives.gov/, https://reaganlibrary.archives.gov/archives/reference/3.31.76.html

Clearly, Reagan understood the usefulness of the citizen's *ethos* from his pre-gubernatorial speaking career and as the Governor of California. Still, he faced a major challenge to his role as an everyday American because he had led a state that, if "it were a nation[,]…would be the 7th-ranking economic power in the world today." He overcame that obstacle in the same way he had as he campaigned to be Governor: he emphasized his role as a citizen-politician. He downplayed his place as a politician, offhandedly noting, "My experience in government was the eight years I served as governor of California." Reagan's comment served two purposes. First, by understating the importance of his former position, he maintained a kind of closeness to his audience. Second, by invoking the governorship he laid claim to the *ethos* that came with a position of power. In this way, Reagan reaped the benefit of the citizen's *ethos* and the politician's. Reagan doubled down on the *ethos* of the citizen-politician through his narrative of the accidental politician: "I had never in my life thought of seeking or holding public office and I'm still not quite sure how it all happened. In my own mind, I was a citizen representing my fellow citizens against the institution of government." Reagan established his *ethos* by simultaneously playing up his role as a regular American who did not actively grab for the reins of power while shoring up his political authority through the acknowledgment of his governorship.

Once he had established his authority to speak on political matters, Reagan attacked Ford on a number of domestic issues then turned his attention to foreign affairs. The roles of the United States and the Soviet Union on the world stage were prominent in the speech. Reagan leaned heavily on aspects of prophetic dualism to emphasize the good of the US versus the evil of the Soviet Union. In part, he painted the picture of the Soviet Union as an expansionist danger through what he saw as the weaknesses of the Ford administration. Reagan seized on Secretary

of State Henry Kissinger's claim that the United States was behind the Soviet Union in world power, that its place as the preeminent world power was finished, and on Kissinger's declaration that, "'My job as Secretary of State is to negotiate the most acceptable second-best position available.'"[198] A world "where the Soviet Union is Number One," said Reagan, was not a world in which anyone would want to live. As evidence of the many places communism had taken root and created an undesirable place to live, Reagan used *accumulatio*, amassing a list of oppressed countries in the Soviet sphere of influence. One needed only "ask the people of Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary...East Germany, Bulgaria, [and] Romania" and the truth of what a world under Soviet superiority would be like would become evident. Reagan's audience would have recognized those countries as places where free elections and individual liberty did not exist. The people of those "captive nations," said Reagan, were "slaves." The differences between the US and the Soviet Union were not simply governmental; they were moral differences too awful to ignore.

America's divine birth amplified those differences. God placed the US—what Reagan called "the last island of freedom"—"between the two great oceans to be found by those who had a special love of freedom and the courage to leave the countries of their birth," while the Soviet government was a gang of slavers bent on dominating their neighbors, and if given the chance, the world. Citizens of Soviet-influenced countries fought to escape their oppressors at the same time "modern-day immigrants" flocked to America. The US "created government as our servant, beholden to us and possessing no powers except those voluntarily granted to it by us," and the Soviets instituted communism by force. American democracy was good because it sought to "advance the dignity of man" even as communism debased its citizens. Reagan's prophetic

[198] Ibid.

dualism frame clearly delineated good from evil. The US did God's will, and the Soviet Union opposed God's will.

It was not surprising that Reagan characterized the Soviet Union as wicked, because in previous speeches, he had directly compared communism to Nazism, essentially naming the Soviets the successors to the Nazis as the great evil in the world. In this speech, Reagan established the Soviet-Nazi analogy by invoking Winston Churchill and made what amounted to arguments against appeasement.

"National security," said Reagan, was "one problem which must be solved or everything else is meaningless." For Reagan, national security was anything that threatened the safety of America and its citizens, as well as that which posed a danger to democratic ideals anywhere in the world, for an attack on democracy abroad was an attack on democracy at home. There was only one thing which constituted such a threat. An "echo from the past," in the person of Winston Churchill's grandson, named the "danger" that menaced the world: "the spread of totalitarianism threatens the world once again." Reagan's invocation of Winston Churchill and the past spread of totalitarianism was a reference to the Nazi occupations, and attempted occupations, of numerous countries during World War II. The present spread of totalitarianism came in the form of communism. Thus, as was the case in his earlier rhetoric, Reagan found communism directly analogous to Nazism.

What led to the Nazi Germany's rise to power and their subsequent invasion of their neighbors was a policy of appeasement. Reagan saw the same signs of appeasement in US foreign policy under Ford. Reagan cited America's half-hearted support of Angola's fight against Cuban-backed, and by proxy, Soviet-backed, leftist militants as a kind of appeasement because America "gave just enough support to one side to encourage it to fight and die, but too little to

give them a chance of winning." When the US failed to give the Angolans the tools to win outright against the communists, they had effectively followed a policy of appeasement that allowed a communist government to take hold.

The pattern of appeasement took different forms according to Reagan, including a policy of détente with communist countries that often compromised what he believed were American morals and values. Reagan's litany of instances of appeasement with Communist governments included an agreement to "reduce our military presence on Taiwan where we have a longtime friend and ally" in order to benefit from a relationship with China; establishing "friendly relations with Hanoi" so that the US might "learn the fate of the men still listed as Missing in Action," something that "should have been one of our first demands of Hanoi's patron saint, the Soviet Union, if détente had any meaning at all"; a "campaign to befriend [Fidel] Castro while he "continues to export revolution to Puerto Rico, to Angola, and who knows where else"; and negotiations with the "pro-Communist" dictator, Omar Torrijos, to "[give] up our ownership of the Panama Canal Zone" even as he "threatens sabotage and guerrilla attacks on our installations if we don't yield to his demands." Yet, for all of the unsavory instances of appeasement to communist countries, Reagan protested most vociferously against Soviet foreign policy. Reagan bemoaned the relative strength of the Soviet military to our own, citing statistics to prove the dangerous position America was in militarily. The strength of the Soviet military was important because Reagan believed that when America is "Number Two in a world where it's dangerous, if not fatal, to be second best"[199] then it necessarily negotiated from a position of weakness. That weakness led to agreements that encouraged Soviet expansionism, and ultimately, the spread of a totalitarian system that was analogous to Nazism. Reagan's implicit argument was that by appeasing the Soviets and their proxies, the US was inviting the Soviet Union to follow the lead

[199] Reagan, "To Restore America."

of the Nazi party and attempt to expand their totalitarian system of government with the ultimate goal of world domination.

Reagan's "To Restore America" drew on his two and half decades of rhetorical strategies to create a message that was familiar and effective with his audience. In it, Reagan played the role of the citizen-politician on a mission to save the United States from an unworthy government that endangered American democratic values, morals, and safety. He claimed both the citizen's and politician's *ethos* so that he might command the authority to continue his long-standing Soviet narrative depicting the Soviets and their system as antithetical to Americans and democracy. The Soviets were, as they had long been, an immoral, insidious blight on the world, something more akin to the Nazis of World War II than good global citizens of the modern world.

Conclusion

Although the US and the Soviet Union did not engage in direct military conflict, the Cold War nonetheless bred anxiety, not only between the superpowers, but across the globe. Reagan keenly felt this anxiety, and in large part, he counseled Americans to recognize it as a warning to be vigilant against the agents of communism who were attempting to infiltrate not only America, but countries around the world, in order to bring ruination to our way of life. That message was clear throughout his pre-presidential rhetoric. Reagan's pre-presidential rhetoric evolved over time, but his commitment to what he saw as essential American values remained the same. Reagan, in both his roles as citizen and politician, made use of some of the same arguments that circulated through and from contemporary politicians. He argued that communism was a flawed ideology; that the Soviet Union was an insidious, aggressive state that demanded that the US continue an arms race with the communists; that the US was a force of good, while the Soviet

Union was a force of evil; and that Americans needed to be alert to the dangers of encroaching communist influence.

Reagan's Soviet rhetoric was clearly influenced by previous Cold War rhetoric. His early presidential Cold War rhetoric may have been the most vitriolic, exaggerated and damning language of any president since Truman. The US might coexist with the Soviet Union, if for nothing else than to avoid a nuclear war, but there was little hope for reaching a lasting peace between the two disparate systems of government. He believed that the US and USSR's relationship would be forever on a limited, static level, and that greatly influenced his rhetoric. He used rhetorical strategies and tropes that constantly put the US in a place of greater moral and systemic certitude of goodness than that of the Soviet Union. Thus he set the foundation of his presidential Soviet rhetoric, and in turn the rhetorical history he would have to negotiate as he changed his rhetoric in the second term of his presidency.

The events of the Cold War prior to Reagan's election as president offer a view into why the anxieties of the Cold War were high. A long series of political conflicts kept the US and the Soviet Union in a constant state of mutual suspicion and distrust. It was in this climate of suspicion that Reagan found a willing audience for his declarations about the looming Communist Menace and the Soviet desire to destroy the American way of life. Americans needed to be aware that communist agents were attempting to undermine the US democratic system, and that armed with that knowledge, they could bravely defend the American political and social systems. To help illustrate the dangers of communist encroachment, Reagan relied on rhetorical strategies characteristic of his political oratory such as the citizen's *ethos*, prophetic dualism, and the idea that that communists were analogous to Nazis.

Reagan's beliefs and use of these rhetorical strategies were not cut of whole cloth, but stitched together by the historical context of the moment and his interpretation of those moments. His interpretations of the historical moments and events of the Cold War in relation to the US-Soviet relationship were unwavering and he repeatedly delivered the same messages regarding the Soviet Union over the course of many years before he became the President of the United States. These messages concretized the public's view of Reagan's understanding of US-Soviet relations, as well as offered insight into the way many Americans understood and reacted to the actions, ideas, and politics of the Soviet Union. As such, Reagan created a rhetorical legacy that defined the way in which others expected him to address and engage the Soviets, and this legacy was prominent in the public and political reaction to Reagan's negotiation of his changing second-term Soviet rhetoric.

Understanding Reagan's use of *ethos,* prophetic dualism, and analogy to tell the story of an inveterate evil in the form of the Soviet Union is a kind of key to reading and recognizing where Reagan's presidential rhetoric is rooted. What becomes obvious is that by the time Reagan reached the White House, he had nearly 35 years of telling a US-Soviet narrative. In that narrative, the Soviet Union is an irredeemable force of evil engaged in an ideological, social, and political battle with the United States. With over three decades invested in that specific narrative, Reagan abruptly changed the direction of the story; the Soviet Union started to redeem itself. That change in the narrative was unexpected, and by understanding Reagan's seemingly unchangeable Soviet narrative, we gain a greater awareness of the magnitude of Reagan starting to craft, not a story of the unredeemable Soviet Union, but a story of Soviet redemption.

Chapter Three

In 1981, Reagan reached the White House. In his first term, the President continued the Soviet narrative he had told for nearly 35 years: the Soviet Union was an irredeemable force of evil engaged in an ideological, social, and political battle with the United States. Thus, for Reagan, it was imperative that the US possessed a strong military, economy, and will in the face of the Soviet threat. At the start of his presidency, the US had just emerged from a decade in which the Vietnam War caused its citizens to question American ideological and military superiority, the expansion of détente, and President Jimmy Carter's insistence that America was experiencing a malaise and a crisis of confidence. Reagan's first goal as president was to rebuild the perception of a powerful military and a confident American people. In part, he did this through advancing a strong foreign policy. He stressed the Soviet Union's military build-up and the need for the United States to level the playing field by increasing military spending. He also needed to address American perceptions: "Reagan put the need for a renewed vision of and faith in the nation and its role in the world above all other considerations, even the need to rearm. The nation's pride and confidence had to be restored."[200] In his view, the United States needed to return to a confident and moral sense of self: "An America that is militarily and economically strong is not enough. The world must see an America that is morally strong with a creed and a vision."[201] Reagan long held that a strong military, healthy economy, and clear morality were vital pieces of the national character.

In Reagan's estimation, a decade of détente had exacerbated the degradation of national military and moral structures. Leading up to Reagan's presidency, détente had failed, in large

[200] Robert W. Tucker, "Reagan's Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, 68, no. 1 (1989): 9.
[201] Ronald Reagan, "Remarks at the Annual Convention of the Congressional Medal of Honor Society in New York City," (speech, New York, NY, December 12, 1983), *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=40854.

part because the Soviets rejected "'deep cuts' in strategic arsenals," the US Senate refused to "ratify the SALT II arms control treaty," the Soviets waged "'proxy wars' in Angola and Central America," the US engaged in "global arms sales," Poland and the Soviet Union carried out major human rights violations, the US "attempt[ed] to orchestrate an Olympic boycott in retaliation for the [Soviet led] Afghanistan invasion," and the US continued the development of the neutron bomb.[202] Détente was supposed to ease political tensions between the superpowers but ideological conflict and the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 effectively ended the policy. Reagan believed that détente had placed America in grave danger:

> In the last 15 years or more, the Soviet Union has engaged in a relentless military buildup, overtaking and surpassing the United States in major categories of military power, acquiring what can only be considered an offensive military capability. All the moral values which this country cherishes—freedom, democracy, the right of peoples and nations to determine their own destiny, to speak and write, to live and worship as they choose—all these basic rights are fundamentally challenged by a powerful adversary which does not wish these values to survive.[203]

In the face of such Soviet danger, Reagan argued that US foreign policy needed to operate under two conditions: "The need to revitalize the United States and world economy as a basis for the social and economic progress of our own and other nations, and the need to provide adequate defenses to remain strong, safe, in a precarious period of world history."[204]

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[202] G. Thomas Goodnight, "Ronald Reagan's Re-formulation of the Rhetoric of War: Analysis of the "Zero Option," "Evil Empire," and "Star Wars" Addresses," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 72, no. 4 (1986): 391-392.
[203] Ronald Reagan, "Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at the Los Angeles World Affairs Council Luncheon in California," (speech, Las Angeles, CA, March 31, 1983), *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=41123.
[204] Ronald Reagan, "Remarks at a Luncheon of the World Affairs Council of Philadelphia in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania," (speech, Philadelphia, PA, October 15, 1981), *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=43139.

Reagan set in motion his plans for an economic revival and military build-up, in part because he believed both were necessary to combat communism. While the economy and the military strengthened, Reagan set his rhetorical powers to discrediting, denouncing, and demonizing the Soviet Union. In his first term, the President continued his anti-communist rhetoric of the previous two decades. Through speeches and statements, Reagan told the story of a global enemy in the form of the Soviet Union. The Soviets were villains on the world stage; they were untrustworthy, devious, dangerous, and a threat to the safety of all people. Soviet leaders were irredeemable despots clinging to a dying system.

Reagan's pre-presidential Soviet rhetoric set the tone for his first-term presidential rhetoric. As a citizen, a governor, and a potential presidential nominee, Reagan established his authority on Soviet-American relations. As he entered the White House, Reagan's characterization of Soviet and American ideologies as antithetical, and of the Russians as the premier evil in the world, positioned Reagan to continue his narrative of the irredeemable Soviet Union. In his first term, Reagan told the story of a Soviet Union that had acted aggressively since the end of World War II while the US and its allies modeled decency and peaceful vigilance. He characterized Soviets as savages who trampled the freedoms of people wherever they or their proxies gained influence or control. Despite the magnitude of the Russian menace, Reagan told his audiences that the Soviet Union could and would be defeated, for it fought on the wrong side of history. Reagan carried his pre-presidential Soviet narrative through his first term.

In this chapter, I examine three recurring elements in Reagan's first-term Soviet rhetoric: 1) a post-World War II historical narrative of the Soviet Union and the United States; 2) the social, political, and moral character of the US, the Soviets, and their allies that flowed out of that story; and, 3) the actions needed to assure the West's eventual triumph over Soviet

communism. These rhetorical elements concretized Reagan's decades-long Soviet narrative. Four speeches[205] continued the narrative and established a clear pattern of misdeeds perpetrated by the Soviet Union. Understanding the scope and breadth of that foundational rhetoric is important to the success of my claim that Reagan's changing second-term Soviet rhetoric created a Soviet redemption story that spanned the eight years of his presidency.

Historical Narrative

Throughout his first-term, Reagan constructed a historical narrative that emphasized the aggressive and duplicitous actions of the Soviet Union since the end of World War II. At the same time, he contrasted the actions of the Soviets with those of the United States and its allies. The emergent historical narrative told the story of a Soviet Union actively extending its political and military might through bad faith and bad acts while the West opposed them in ideology and action. Using historical narrative was an effective strategy because "narratives function to construct the social reality that constitutes the lived world of social actors."[206] The constitutive power of narrative is well established. As James Jasinski notes, Aristotle recognized that "narrative is an effective mode for depicting character."[207] Reagan's narrative consistently impugned the Soviet Union's character; simultaneously, Reagan's chronicle praised the United States' character. Thus, Reagan constituted the Soviets' role as immoral antagonists and the Americans' role as moral protagonists in the Cold War story.

Reagan's place in the Soviet redemption narrative was ambiguous. He was the narrator, an agent, and a facilitator, but he was never the protagonist of the story. He performed his part in

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[205] "Zero Option Address" (11/18/1981); "Address to the British Parliament" (6/8/1982); "Address to the National Association of Evangelicals," or the "Evil Empire" speech (3/8/1983); and "Address to the Nation and Other Countries on US-Soviet Relations" (1/16/1984).

[206] Dennis K. Mumby, introduction to *Narrative and Social Control: Critical Perspectives*, ed. Dennis Mumby (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1993), 5.

[207] James Jasinski, "Narrative," in *The Sourcebook on Rhetoric: Key Concepts in Contemporary Rhetorical Studies* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2001), 393.

the tale, and at the same time, he was part of the general populace; he was no more than any American. It seems like an odd role for the President, but given the pains he took to cultivate his everyman persona, it was fitting. He both told and did in the narrative: he reported to the American people on the state of US-Soviet relations, and he readily described his interactions with Soviet leaders. Yet, his speeches always focused on the ontological aspects of American citizenship. Reagan consistently placed himself among his fellow Americans, not outside of them. Thus, despite his place in the historical Soviet narrative, Reagan's role was far more like the Grandfather's in *The Princess Bride* than the Dread Pirate Roberts's.

From the outset of his presidency, Reagan made it clear that the Soviets were untrustworthy. His Soviet rhetoric was sharp and divisive, and it remained so throughout his first term. In his first press conference, Reagan set the tone for his presidential Soviet rhetoric. Reagan claimed that Soviet leaders "reserve[ed] unto themselves the right to commit any crime, to lie, to cheat" in order to further a political agenda that included the "promotion of world revolution and a one-world Socialist or Communist state."[208] Reagan's characterization constituted the Soviets as global criminals bent on dominating the world through an ideology that, although untenable and destined to fail, stood in stark opposition to democracy even as the passage of time hurled communism toward its expiration.

In much the same way Dwight Eisenhower's Cold War rhetoric was a "historical development of romanticism" constituted by the unyielding purpose, "necessity," or "force" of nature and "spirit," or freedom,[209] Reagan's rhetoric created of the Soviet historical narrative a decidedly dyadic concept. On one hand, history was a force seeking its teleological end in terms of the Soviet Union. History moved the USSR ever closer to its inevitable downfall; the world

[208] Ronald Reagan, "The President's News Conference," (speech, Washington, DC, January 29, 1981), *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=44101.
[209] Ned O'Gorman, *Spirits of the Cold War* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2012): 173-174.

could simply wait for the Soviet Union's collapse. On the other hand, Reagan keenly felt the West's responsibility to usher along the Soviet downfall. It was a moral imperative too strong to resist, and Reagan believed America should have a part in bringing the Soviet Union to an expeditious collision with history, and ultimately, its destruction. Likely, Reagan encouraged the West to participate in quickening the Soviet Union's demise because history tied together the American-Soviet past, present, and future. The history of US-Soviet relations was not a series of discrete moments, but a continuous narrative that brought those moments together "thematically and providentially."[210] In other words, America was invested in the present and future of the Soviet Union, because it had always been invested in the Soviet Union.

Personal and political turmoil filled Reagan's first year in office. In February 1981, General Wojciech Jaruzelski, "in full alliance with, and with full support from, the highest state organs of the Soviet Union and the military command of the Warsaw Pact,"[211] became the President of the Council of Ministers (Prime Minister) of Poland. In December of the same year, the "communist government of General Jaruzelski introduced martial law…in order to suppress Solidarity, an independent, non-communist trade union that had emerged in 1980" and "was becoming a significant political movement in Poland."[212] Jaruzelski's ascension was evidence of Reagan's long-held belief that the Soviet Union would expand and solidify its power and influence whenever and wherever it could.

A month after Jaruzelski rose to power, and only two months after Reagan became president, John Hinckley Jr. shot and wounded the President. The assassination attempt bolstered Reagan's political power: "No other president in American history had recovered from a gunshot

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[210] Daniel T. Rogers, *Age of Fraction* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011): 222.
[211] Eric Chenoweth. "Dancing with Dictators." *World Affairs* 177, no. 3 (September 2014): 57-67. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCO*host*.
[212] Michael L. Dockrill and Michael F. Hopkins, *The Cold War*, 2nd. ed (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2006), 138.

wound sustained while in office, and Reagan's survival generated a wave of public sympathy that boosted his popularity and gave crucial momentum to his conservative political agenda early in his first term."[213] Reagan's near-death experience was a boon for a foreign policy plan that included strengthening the United States' military power in the face of long-unchecked Soviet military and global expansion.

Reagan insisted that the Soviet Union, Soviet proxy states, and Soviet-friendly nations were a great threat to global stability, the United States, and America's democratic allies. The Soviets offered political and military backing not only to communist states but also to enemies of the United States. The consequence of such relationships came to the fore on August 19th, when Soviet-built, Libyan jet fighters engaged American jets during a US Navy training exercise in the Gulf of Sidra. Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi claimed dominion over international waters where the US was running its exercise and ordered the jets into the air. US fighters shot down two of the Libyan jets.[214] One month later, Gaddafi, who in the past had eschewed public alignment with the Soviets, championed a "treaty of friendship with the Soviet Union."[215]

The Soviet threat to democratic allies of the US was on display in October when a Soviet submarine ran aground near a Swedish naval base at Karlskrona.[216] Despite Soviet protestations that faulty instrumentation led to the submarine's grounding, Swedish officials concluded that the vessel most likely carried "nuclear-tipped torpedoes" and that "'the Soviet submarine intentionally violated Swedish territory for the purpose of carrying on illegal activities,'"

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[213] H.W. Brands, "Reagan Reborn." *American History* 48, no. 3 (August 2013): 46-51. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCO*host*.
[214] "Over the Gulf of Sidra," *New York Times*, August 20, 1981, http://search.proquest.com.proxy2.library.illinois.edu/docview/121735113?accountid=14553.
[215] Geoffrey Godsell, "Libya Sidles Up to Soviet Union, Posing New Threat to Africa," *The Christian Science Monitor*, September 17, 1981, http://search.proquest.com.proxy2.library.illinois.edu/docview/512268866?accountid=14553
[216] "Soviet Submarine Runs Itself Aground in Restricted Waters Off Swedish Base," *The Washington Post*, October 29, 1981, http://search.proquest.com.proxy2.library.illinois.edu/docview/147283707?accountid=14553.

probably "spying or testing coastal defenses."[217] Thus were the events leading up to the "Zero Option Address." Reagan had survived an assassination attempt, watched as Poland crushed a democratic movement, saw a Middle-East foe attack the US, then ally with the Soviets, and observed a Soviet submarine infiltrate the coastal waters of a US ally.

The recent actions of the Soviet Union, their proxies, and their allies lent credibility to Reagan's Soviet narrative, and it illuminated the Russians' immoral character. A narrative of any kind has a beginning, but the Soviet actions of the previous year did not constitute the opening of their narrative. In his "Zero Option Address," Reagan identified World Wars I and II as the nebulous start of the historical narrative of the Soviet Union and the United States. The "Zero Option Address" was a policy speech that made great use of the history of Western and Soviet social and political actions. The policy at hand was a "program for preserving peace in Europe and our wider program for arms control"[218] that included removing all medium-range US and Soviet nuclear weapons from Europe. That Reagan should wish peace for the European continent was no surprise, because according to him, America had a long history of helping secure that peace. Peace was not easily won; the US paid for it with the blood of its citizens:

> Twice in my lifetime, I have seen the peoples of Europe plunged into the tragedy of war. Twice in my lifetime, Europe has suffered destruction and military occupation in wars that statesmen proved powerless to prevent, soldiers unable to contain, and ordinary citizens unable to escape. And twice in my lifetime, young Americans have bled their

[217] L. Downie, Jr., "Sub Probably Carries N-arms, Sweden Says." *Newsday*, November 6, 1981, http://search.proquest.com.proxy2.library.illinois.edu/docview/964507961?accountid=14553.
[218] Ronald Reagan, "Remarks to Members of the National Press Club on Arms Reduction and Nuclear Weapons," (speech, Washington, DC, November 18, 1981), *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=43264; This speech is better known by the title "Zero Option Address."

> lives into the soil of those battlefields not to enrich or enlarge our domain, but to restore the peace and independence of our friends and Allies.[219]

The "twice in my lifetime" parallel structure reinforced the message that America had paid a heavy price in the name of peace, and it brought to light Europe's history of terrible wars. Note, as well, Reagan's claim that America was selfless; the US sought only to help its allies, not gain some material advantage. The United States' selfless character emerged through the historical narrative. It was common for Reagan to praise the early actions of the United States and lionize its people. The Soviets, however, were not afforded the same accolades, despite their important role in defeating Nazi Germany. Throughout Reagan's rhetoric, he depicted the US as a selfless, free nation. By comparison, the Soviets were selfish, seeking to gain material and political advantage on the world stage, and had been so since the end of World War II.

At the heart of Reagan's proposal to eliminate medium-range weapons from Europe was a critique of Soviet behavior since the end of World War II. Reagan showed some restraint in the "Zero Option Address"; he did not directly attack the Soviet Union. Rather, he enumerated many actions and inactions that revealed the Soviet Union's character. The speech is divided into three sections: an introduction in the form of a letter from Reagan to Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, ostensibly detailing obstacles to world peace; a long section, in which Reagan offered a political, social and military history, as well as introduced his "Zero Option Address" arms control plan; and, finally, a brief meditation on "'peace' and 'security.'"[220] Reagan's tone throughout was serious and sincere.

Reagan began the address with an allusion to his recovery from the March 1981 assassination attempt:

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[219] Ibid.
[220] Ibid.

> Back in April while in the hospital I had, as you can readily understand, a lot of time for reflection. And one day I decided to send a personal, handwritten letter to Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev reminding him that we had met about 10 years ago in San Clemente, California, as he and President Nixon were concluding a series of meetings that had brought hope to all the world. Never had peace and good will seemed closer at hand.[221]

Reagan's choice to understate his brush with death enhanced the measured nature of his decision to write Brezhnev about important world affairs. A sense of history was in play, albeit recent, as Reagan recalled a meeting of a decade earlier during Brezhnev's visit to the US. Brezhnev and Nixon met to discuss "the process of reshaping relations between the USA and the USSR on the basis of peaceful coexistence and equal security as set forth in the Basic Principles of Relations Between the USA and the USSR signed in Moscow on May 29, 1972."[222] Reagan's anecdotal letter writing, then, became the frame of reference for the remainder of the address.

Reagan's choice to send a handwritten letter demonstrated the sincerity and importance of the correspondence. The subject matter—Richard Nixon's meeting with Brezhnev in a "series of meetings that had brought hope to the world"—was gravely important to Reagan.[223] Reagan's language was intense and vibrant. In 1972, Reagan asked Brezhnev if he was "aware that the hopes and aspirations of millions of people throughout the world were dependent on the decisions that would be reached in those meetings." Reagan recalled Brezhnev's response: "You took my hand in both of yours and assured me…that you were dedicated with all your heart and

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[221] Ibid.
[222] "Joint U.S.-U.S.S.R. Communique, San Clemente, June 24, 1973," *The Washington Post*, June 24, 1973, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/longterm/summit/archive/com1973-1.htm.
[223] Reagan, "Zero Option Address."

soul and mind to fulfilling those hopes and dreams."[224] G. Thomas Goodnight notes that "the vivid, detailed image radiates mutual sincerity, even as the episode reveals that the President's concern for world peace (and initiatives) extend far back into the past."[225] Both the question and the response revealed measures of character. The dramatic question served three purposes: First, it emphasized the meeting's scope of importance. Second, it countered perceptions of Reagan as a hawk. Instead, Reagan became a concerned global citizen who wished the best for the world. Third, it placed a large measure of responsibility on the Soviet Union for the failure to produce a durable peace. In short, the question modified Reagan's personal character and the Soviets' general character. The question immediately constituted Reagan's character in a manner different from the recorded historical narrative.

It took a couple of lines more to see how the question reinforced the narrative of the Soviets' bad character. Nearly a decade after the meeting, Reagan's audience knew that for all of the apparent sincerity in the interaction, the Soviets had failed to live up to their leader's statement, revealing the truth of their character. Reagan was clear that "the wishes of the world's people—to be left alone and at peace" remained the same, but Soviet actions during the intervening years showed a pointed disregard for advancing peace. The "Soviet Union [had] demonstrated its insincerity" to the success of the peace process by repressing its citizens and through their "aggressive policies in Cuba and Afghanistan."[226] Brezhnev and the Soviets had failed; the "peace and good will" that "had…never seemed closer" when Nixon met Brezhnev never materialized.[227] Reagan placed the blame for the failure of demonstrable peace squarely on

[224] Ibid.
[225] Goodnight, "Ronald Reagan's Re-formulation of the Rhetoric of War: Analysis of the "Zero Option," "Evil Empire," and "Star Wars" Addresses," 394.
[226] Ibid.
[227] Reagan, "Zero Option Address."

the Russians. Brezhnev's unfulfilled promise that he was dedicated to satisfying people's hopes and dreams was proof of the Soviets' bad character.

When Reagan said, "The people of the world *still* [emphasis added] share that hope,"[228] he implied that Brezhnev had not, in fact, worked at "fulfilling those hopes and dreams." According to Reagan, all people dreamed of living in what amounted to a democratic society: They longed for "the dignity of having some control over their individual lives, their destiny," the ability to "work at the craft or trade of their own choosing and to be fairly rewarded," and the freedom to "raise their families in peace without harming anyone or suffering harm themselves." Freedom of choice and the ability to raise one's family in peace were tenets of American democracy, and Reagan's comments were thinly veiled shots at Soviet communism's purposeful exclusion of those tenets. The President again presented the United States in a positive light. If people desired freedom of choice and safety, and the United States offered those, then it stood to reason that the US was of high moral character. Conversely, the Soviet Union denied their people freedom and safety, and as such, the USSR maintained their low moral character.

Reagan created a timeline that established the United States' tradition of benevolence and the Soviet Union's long history of antagonism. He was clear that history showed that Soviet leaders sought to advance communism across the globe and oppress those who rejected Soviet-style governments. To Reagan's chagrin, he explained that those same repressive communist regimes "often implied" that the US had "territorial ambitions," "imperialistic designs," and threatened the "security" of existing and nascent totalitarian governments. But Reagan refuted those charges, and in an instance of *prolepsis*, possible future claims that impugned the integrity of the US: "Not only is there no evidence to support such a charge, there is solid evidence that the United States, when it could have dominated the world with no risk to itself, made no effort

[228] Ibid.

whatsoever to do so." Moreover, after World War II, America was "the only undamaged industrial power in the world," and it alone possessed atomic weaponry. America could have "sought world domination," but instead, it "followed a different course, one unique in all the history of mankind." The US choose to "rebuild the war-ravished economies of the world, including those of the nations who had been our enemies."[229] Reagan characterized the US as good, chivalrous even; it was historic in its benevolence. The US was presented as a (re)builder on the world stage. It engaged in restrained and balanced world interactions, and it was not aggressive. Reagan attributed these same qualities to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) "policy of peace."

In fact, the formation of NATO was evidence of the Soviet threat. Reagan noted that since its founding in 1949, "the Atlantic Alliance has preserved the peace through unity, deterrence, and dialog." The NATO alliance preserved peace in three ways: First, they "stood united by the firm commitment that an attack upon any one of us would be considered an attack upon us all." Second, they "deterred aggression by maintaining forces strong enough to ensure that any aggressor would lose more from an attack than he could possibly gain." Third, they "engaged the Soviets in a dialog about mutual restraint and arms limitations." The alliance, then, was concerned with the possibility of foreign attacks, maintaining military strength enough to repel foreign attacks, and the Soviets' military power. Reagan's enumeration enthymatically demonstrated the Soviets' long history of menace. NATO's first two steps to preserving peace dealt specifically with safeguarding against foreign military aggression, and the third step explicitly referenced concern for the Soviet Union's military force and its restraint. Therefore, the Soviet Union had to be one of those aggressive, foreign military powers that concerned NATO members. The Soviet Union was not a member of NATO, so Reagan's audience knew

[229] Ibid.

that for at least thirty-two years, the USSR had been an obstacle to preserving peace. Essentially, the President used the historical record to condemn and prove the Soviet Union's low character.

Reagan used comparison and *logos* (in the form of facts and figures) to support his enthymematic argument that the Soviet Union was a danger to the West's safety. Reagan insisted that the members of NATO did not initiate conflict, but they would respond to threats and aggression. Reagan argued that in the past ten years, the Soviet Union displayed their aggression through its military build-up. Since Reagan's 1972 meeting with Brezhnev, the Russians had steadily worked toward outgunning the West by expanding its military forces while the US and NATO had contracted their armed forces. Where the US "reduced the size of its Armed Forces and decreased its military spending," the USSR increased its number of soldiers. The Russians "expanded their real military spending by about one-third," built "some 50,000" tanks—where the US had 11,000—, and " they transformed their navy from a coastal defense force to an open ocean fleet, while the United States, a sea power with transoceanic alliances, cut its fleet in half." During the same period, "NATO deployed no new intermediate-range nuclear missiles and actually withdrew 1,000 nuclear warheads," while "the Soviet Union deployed more than 750 nuclear warheads on the new SS20 missiles alone."

Reagan's language created a sense of expansion and contraction. The Soviet Union occupied a position of strength, while the US was sapped of its power. America's weakened position was untenable, said Reagan, so he had "strengthen[ed] all three legs of the strategic triad: sea-, land-, and air-based." Building up the military was important to "remedy the neglect of the past decade and restore the eroding balance on which our security depends."[230] The Soviets' commanding military position was a "growing threat" to the safety of the West. The US and its allies would have to "counter" the Soviets' aggression through strengthening their own

[230] Ibid.

military might. The recent historical narrative recorded the Soviet Union's antagonist role at the same time the US and its allies embodied their proclaimed role as defenders of peace.

In Reagan's narrative, the Soviet Union's menace extended beyond possible military aggression. Reagan argued that Soviet communism was a flawed system of government for a number of reasons, but its foundational weakness was in its relationship with the people who lived under its control. Reagan pointed out the hypocrisy of the Soviet system, paraphrasing Thomas Jefferson's "First Inaugural" speech: "If [people] are incapable, as some would have us believe, of self-government, then where among them do we find any who are capable of governing others?"[231] Reagan used the same allusion in his "Inaugural Address" to argue against expanding US government reach and oversight.[232] Linking his inaugural speech and the "Zero Option" address demonstrated the continuity of his political beliefs and that Reagan, unlike the Soviets, was not a hypocrite. The Soviet system was unsuccessful in part because the government did not trust its people to make decisions for themselves specifically because the leaders knew the people would choose another form of government. The Russians had had decades to enact positive change in the relationship between the government and its people, yet Soviet leaders perpetuated decades of oppression to maintain power.

Through a series of rhetorical questions, Reagan argued that the ideological failings of communism were to blame for many problems faced by people across the world. Reagan asked, "'Is it possible that we have permitted ideology, political and economic philosophies, and governmental policies to keep us from considering the very real, everyday problems of our peoples?'"[233] By "we," Reagan meant the Soviet Union, of course, for American ideals

[231] Ibid.
[232] Ronald Reagan, "Inaugural Address," (speech, Washington, DC, January 20, 1981), *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=43130.
[233] Reagan, "Zero Option Address."

encouraged ideologies, philosophies, and policies that considered the everyday issues of its people. Two more rhetorical questions followed—an implicit chastisement of Brezhnev, and by extension, the Soviet Union: "Will the average Soviet family be better off or even aware that the Soviet Union has imposed a government of its own choice on the people of Afghanistan? Is life better for the people of Cuba because the Cuban military dictate who shall govern the people of Angola?"[234] The inevitable answer to both was "No." Communism benefitted those in charge at the expense of individuals. Communist governments could make the lives of their citizens better by allowing more freedoms, but they had not. Thus, Brezhnev's false statement that he would try to fulfill the hopes and dreams of communist citizens became another example of the Soviet's history of untrustworthiness.

Responses to the "Zero Option Address" were mixed. The week after Reagan delivered the "Zero Option Address," his job approval poll numbers jumped from 48% to 54%.[235] West European leaders were "generally favorable" to Reagan's proposals, with West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt calling them "'reasonable.'"[236] Tass, the official Soviet news agency, derided the speech as "'propaganda'" and "challenged Reagan's assertion that the Soviet military build-up threatened the European nuclear balance," suggesting that the President "was trying to influence public opinion in Europe" ahead of Brezhnev's trip to West Germany. The European and Soviet responses were unsurprising. The NATO allies believed the Soviets were an immediate danger. On the date of the "Zero Option Address," reports out of Bonn, Germany revealed that simulated war games showed that "the Soviets would break through NATO's forward general defense positions in West Germany," and by the 19th day "Western Europe's

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[234] Ibid.
[235] Gerhard Peters, "Presidential Job Approval: Ronald Reagan," *The American Presidency Project*, accessed November 3, 2016, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/data/popularity.php?pres=40.
[236] Curtis Wilkie, "Asks Soviets to Match US Reduction," *Boston Globe*, November 19, 1981. http://search.proquest.com.proxy2.library.illinois.edu/docview/1009614149?accountid=14553

rear defenses [would] fall." The only way to shift the tide of the Soviet's march on Europe would be "a nuclear counterattack."[237] As for the Soviet response, Reagan knew the outcome beforehand. Ahead of the address, "U.S. arms control specialists" voiced their opinion that the Soviets would reject Reagan's plan, in no small part because the Russians had recently developed the new "triple-warhead SS-20, capable of carrying three nuclear warheads."[238] The Soviets would loath giving up a weapon of such power and were unlikely to do so.

The magnitude of Reagan's proposals presented an obstacle to the address's reception, as did Reagan's past Soviet rhetoric and his image. Reagan's "harsh, tough talk to the Kremlin…frightened U.S. supporters abroad and [had] given force to neutralists' arguments that the President [was] a shoot-from-the-hip zealot, hell-bent on provoking nuclear war." Reagan was characterized as "alternately stern and folksy" in his speech. Despite his "anti-Soviet posture," Reagan nonetheless endeavored to keep lines of communication with the Soviets open through a series of letters. This praise was tempered by critical admonishments about his "Zero Option Address" being "a trifle disingenuous" at the point when he called his plan "simple and straightforward."[239] Reagan's "popular image" was of "a gunslinging cowboy," and though that image would not "change overnight to that of a man of peace," European leaders praised Reagan's speech.[240] Some commentators said that with the policy speech "the West finally has a position on European arms control that is defensible morally and simply, before the broad public and peace protestors alike."[241] Reagan's image as a "foe of arms control" was transformed in a

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[237] Walter Pincus, and Graham, Bradley, "In Case of War," *Boston Globe*, November 18, 1981, http://search.proquest.com.proxy2.library.illinois.edu/docview/1011836753?accountid=14553.
[238] "Reagan Readies Arms-Slash Plan," *Chicago Tribune*, November 18, 1981, http://search.proquest.com.proxy2.library.illinois.edu/docview/172456672?accountid=14553.
[239] Walter Issacson, Bruce W. Nelan, and Johanna McGeary, "Starting from Zero," *Time*, November 30, 1981: 24. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCO*host*.
[240] Elizabeth Pond, "Europe Applauds Reagan's Talk," *The Christian Science Monitor*, November 19, 1981.
[241] Pond, "Europe Applauds Reagan's Talk."

small way as some saw the speech as "necessary and effective" propaganda.[242] The speech was categorized as "clear, unequivocal, and bold," just what the world "wants and needs to hear" from America. It was a speech that some critics said "[put] America on the moral high ground of the nuclear weapons issue."[243]

Reagan's arms proposal did not gain traction between the superpowers, but it served to open arms control dialogue between them. However, the "atmosphere was immediately embittered by developments in Poland" when Soviet-supported General Jaruzelski declared martial law in order to quash Solidarity's rise.[244] The Reagan administration objected to the martial law order and considered it an attack on the freedom of the Polish people. In this acrimonious atmosphere, the Soviets offered their own arms control agreement in February. Brezhnev "proposed a two-thirds cut in United States and Soviet arsenals of medium-range nuclear weapons in Europe by 1990"; Washington immediately rejected it "on the ground that the Soviet Union was now superior in medium-range weapons and that equal cuts would preserve an imbalance."[245]

In June, Reagan embarked on European tour that took him to a number of countries, including England, where he was invited to speak before members of the British Parliament. Reagan's public image continued to be a rhetorical obstacle before his "Address to Members of the British Parliament" ("Westminster Address"). Despite Reagan "seeking international support for his proposals to negotiate arms-reduction agreements," many in the public saw him as a warmonger and believed that the "central thrust of US strategic doctrine" was to "[prevail] in a protracted nuclear war." The Reagan administration denied the charge and insisted that their

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[242] Maclean, John, "President's Speech Seeks to Reassure Western Allies," *Chicago Tribune*, November 19, 1981.
[243] "A START on Arms Control," *Chicago Tribune*, November 19, 1981.
[244] Dockrill and Hopkins, *The Cold War*, 138.
[245] John F. Burns, "Brezhnev Offers Deep Arms Cuts in Europe by '90," *The New York Times*, February, 4, 1982.

focus was on conventional weapons. A focus on conventional weapons served two purposes: First, it deterred Soviet aggression, and second, "if the deterrence fail[ed]," the US could win a war by "outfighting and outlasting the enemy."[246]

It was apparent that the Reagan administration disliked the Soviets, and he made it clear that the Russians were untrustworthy. The Reagan administration often engaged in activities that demonstrated its mistrust of the Soviet Union, such as Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger's revelation that the US planned to have an anti-satellite weapons system in operation within five years. The system would destroy satellites that would help guide Soviet nuclear missiles in the case of attack.[247] Thus, for all of Reagan's insistence that conventional weapons were his focus, the discussion seemed always to come back to nuclear weapons. It was a trend that distressed nuclear freeze proponents. When Reagan arrived in England, there were nuclear arms protests across Europe and America, and on the eve of his address, over "100,000 anti-nuclear demonstrators jammed Hyde Park" and "condemned both the President and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher."[248] Just as Reagan effectively used historical narrative to denigrate the Soviet Union's character, the President's well-worn anti-Soviet rhetoric and connection to nuclear weapons besmirched his own character.

Despite the damage his anti-Soviet rhetoric did to his reputation, the President continued his Soviet censures in the "Westminster Address." Reagan's "Westminster Address" was a celebration of Western democracy and a condemnation of Soviet communism. In Reagan's estimation, the US and Britain were the standard-bearers for democracy. The two countries shared a unique history, and at points, Reagan used the American-British friendship as a kind proof that his historical narrative was not bilateral, limited only to the US and the Soviet Union,

[246] Wood, David, "US De-Emphasizes 'Protracted' N-War," *Boston Globe*, Jun 7, 1982.
[247] "US Reportedly has Antisatellite Weapons Plan," *Boston Globe*, June 7, 1982.
[248] "British Nuclear Protesters Call Reagan a Warmonger," *Los Angeles Times*, June 7, 1982.

but multilateral, including the US, its allies, and the Soviets. The speech "stated a rhetorical theory of the cold war" in which Reagan "systematically subverted the narrative, ideology, and values of Marxism" as he "presented a coherent narrative, a value definition, and an ideological worldview that were completely consonant and antithetical to the narrative, value definition, and ideology of the Soviets."[249] Two historical frameworks—one of Britain and America's shared sense of democracy, and the other of aggressive, violent totalitarian regimes—evoked a spirit of cooperation. "It is this sense of history, this understanding of the past that I want to talk with you about today," said Reagan, "for it is in remembering what we share of the past that our two nations can make common cause for the future."[250] The history that the US and Britain shared led naturally to the two countries standing against communism in the present and future because the existence of communism was a direct threat to the future of democracy.

The future should have been bright, but it was not. The shadow of a Soviet nuclear threat darkened the future. The "gifts of science and technology…made life easier," but they "also made it more dangerous." Reagan declared that there were unprecedented "threats…to our freedom, indeed to our very existence, that other generations could never even have imagined."[251] The "threat of global war" and "the existence of nuclear weapons could mean, if not the extinction of mankind, then surely the end of civilization as we know it." Just as he had in the "Zero Option Address," Reagan linked military danger and the Soviet Union. In response to the threat of global nuclear war, Reagan would begin "Strategic Arms Reduction Talks [(START)]" with the Soviets to "reduc[e] the risk of war by reducing the means of waging war." Since the early 1950s, when the Soviet Union successfully tested their first atomic weapon,

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[249] Robert C. Rowland and John M. Jones, *Reagan at Westminster* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2010), 18.
[250] Ronald Reagan, "Address to Members of the British Parliament," (speech, London, England, June 8, 1982), *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=42614.
[251] Ibid.

Soviet aggression and expansion passed through the realm of the sinister into the malevolent. The historical narrative told Reagan that leaving the Soviet Union unchecked in the nuclear age could lead to global disaster.

The Soviet Union had a history of violently grabbing power if allowed. The Soviets had proved that through the policies of their totalitarian form of government. The President was clear that totalitarianism was an abomination on the landscape of the world, especially where the sanctity of personal freedom was at stake. Individual freedom was threatened by "the enormous power of the modern state." The Soviets oppressed their citizens and denied them freedom of choice in various areas of their lives. Reagan noted that history taught "the dangers of government that overreaches-political control taking precedence over free economic growth, secret police, mindless bureaucracy, all combining to stifle individual excellence and personal freedom." Reagan recognized that there was a "legitimate disagreement over the extent to which the public sector should play a role in a nation's economy and life" found among the US and several European countries. However, he was sure that "on one point all of us are united—our abhorrence of dictatorship in all its forms, but most particularly totalitarianism and the terrible inhumanities it has caused in our time—the great purge, Auschwitz and Dachau, the Gulag, and Cambodia."[252] The allusions were to the USSR, Nazi Germany, and Khmer Rouge. By grouping known totalitarian governments together, the atrocities that occurred under the rule of each became the atrocities of all totalitarian governments. The major totalitarian force in the world was the Soviet Union, and Reagan linked crimes and atrocities visited on different peoples in the 20th century to the Soviet Union, solidifying its position as a malevolent force in the world.

The use of historical narrative carried through from the "Zero Option Address" to the "Westminster Address." However, in the "Westminster Address," Reagan amplified the menace

[252] Ibid.

and danger the Soviets posed to the present. The Soviets had a history of bad actions, but in the climate of the day, the outcomes of Soviet misdeeds far outstripped anything from the past. Reagan magnified the danger, and in a sense, the Soviet willingness to engage in threatening actions, by grouping the Soviets with other insidious totalitarian governments. Reagan created an association, and in turn, constituted the Soviet Union as one among a number of wicked governments willing to unleash atrocities on their own people and the world.

Reactions to the speech were again mixed. Reagan's job approval rating did not change after the "Westminster Address."[253] The address was occasioned with "pomp" but also "the feeling that often infuses the special relationship between Britain and the United States."[254] Reagan's audience was impressed with his delivery, which he gave "apparently without glancing at a note" and "without faltering once."[255] British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher praised the address in the highest, calling it "magnificent" and "a triumph." Thatcher's accolades seemed hyperbolic in the moment as she thanked Reagan for "putting freedom on the offensive, which is where it should be. You wrote a new chapter in our history—no longer on the defensive but on the offensive."[256] The speech drew a sharp rebuke from the Soviets. The Soviet news agency, Tass, accused Reagan of leading an anti-Soviet movement and unfairly blaming the Soviet Union for all of the world's ills.[257] Others saw the speech as Reagan's declaration that he was "a man of peace and of substance, and [not] a trigger-happy intellectual lightweight, as he is sometimes

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[253] Gerhard Peters, "Presidential Job Approval: Ronald Reagan," *The American Presidency Project*, accessed November 3, 2016, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/data/popularity.php?pres=40.
[254] William Borders, "Reagan at Westminster: Red Carpet All the Way," *New York Times*, June 9, 1982.
[255] "British Politicians Learn Secret of Reagan's Oratory," *Los Angeles Times*, June 8, 1982; Pressed for the "secret" of his seemingly flawless oration, an American official pointed out the teleprompters. It was the first time the Brits had seen a speaker use a teleprompter.
[256] Ronald Reagan, "Toasts of the President and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher at a Luncheon Honoring the President in London," (speech, London, England, June 8, 1982), *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=42615.
[257] Dusko Doder, "Soviets Sharply Assail Reagan Over 'Crusade,'" *The Washington Post*, June 10, 1982.

portrayed."[258] The overall American reaction to the speech was lukewarm. Many critics dismissed it as a rehash of the President's previous Soviet rhetoric, or condemned Reagan's lack of a specific plan to achieve his goals, or claimed his rhetoric was overly strident.[259]

Reagan's narrative made great use of comparisons between the US and the Soviet Union, and his "Address to the Nation and Other Countries on US-Soviet Relations" followed the same pattern. Speaking the night before a "European disarmament conference in Stockholm," Reagan said that the present was "a time of challenges to peace, but also of opportunities to peace." As was common, he depicted America's desire for a durable peace, one "that enhances dignity for men and women everywhere." As per usual, the Soviet Union took its place as the United States' foil in the peace process. Reagan wanted to "establish a constructive and realistic working relationship with the Soviet Union." The President believed the US was "in the strongest position in years" to do so because it had left détente behind and strengthened its military. As in earlier speeches, Reagan enumerated how the Soviets ramped up their military production to unprecedented levels while the US and their allies "neglected our defenses" and "the risks of serious confrontation grew."[260] The US and the Soviet Union had clearly entrenched themselves in their respective roles as Cold War: The US was a benevolent guardian, and the USSR was an insidious blight on the world.

Reagan noted that since he took office, the US reversed its weakened position, and with a "mandate from the American people…change[d] course" in such a way that America could be sure of its "commitment to defend our values." America's recovery must have vexed the Soviet

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[258] "Reagan, in a Speech Before Parliament, Praises Democracy," *Wall Street*, June 9, 1982.
[259] Rowland and Jones, *Reagan at Westminster*, 90-96.
[260] Ronald Reagan, "Address to the Nation and Other Countries on United States-Soviet Relations," (speech, Washington, DC, January 16, 1984), *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=39806.

Union, claimed Reagan, because Soviet leaders often said "that our demise was inevitable."[261] The President claimed that America's military position led to an increase in "strident rhetoric from the Kremlin." Nonetheless, said Reagan, with a newly built military, "America's deterrence is more credible, and it is making the world a safer place—safer because now there is less danger that the Soviet leadership will underestimate our strength or question our resolve." The Soviet Union was a real danger in the world, and to counteract their presence, the US greatly strengthened its military capabilities. Thus, the world was a safer place because of its military might and ability to safeguard against Soviet aggression.[262]

The President called for peaceful competition and a world in which armed conflict was eliminated, but he presented the Soviet Union's actions as serious obstacles to those goals. Reagan lamented that the "armed conflicts in the Middle East, Afghanistan, Southeast Asia, Central America, and Africa" and areas where "independent nations are confronted by heavily armed neighbors seeking to dominate by threatening attack or subversion….have been exploited by the Soviet Union and its surrogates." The Soviet Union fueled conflict and "export[ed] violence," worsening "tensions," "suffering," and "social and economic problems."[263] The Soviets were instigators and exploiters, and their involvement in conflict across the globe served no purpose but to further their political agenda. In short, according to Reagan, the Soviet Union was a major perpetrator of violence in the world and had been throughout the mid and late 20th century.

Reagan's first-term speeches laid out the historical narrative of Soviet aggression in the 20th century through the comparison of US and Soviet actions. In turn, the narrative revealed the character of the superpowers. Reagan implicitly invited to his audience to compare the virtues of

[261] Ibid.
[262] Ibid.
[263] Ibid.

the US to the iniquities of communist states. Through comparison, the story of the US and Soviet Union in the 20th century was one of parallel and antithetical rivals. The US encouraged freedom, defense, and benevolence where the Soviets actively sought to spread communism, oppress its citizenry, and build up its military. Reagan's historical narrative presented a specific picture of the Soviet Union that gave some insight into the character of the Soviets and the Americans. In fact, the superpowers' character was integral to Reagan's rhetoric, and the character of the two nations and their allies emerged out of and were defined in these speeches. Reagan's emphasis on national character defined the antagonists and protagonists of his narrative.

Character

We have seen how Reagan used historical narrative to reveal the Soviets' character: He characterized the Soviet Union as savages and aggressors in order to make his political words and deeds seem reasonable. Robert Ivie argues that part of Reagan's rhetorical success in dealing with US-USSR relationships is the appeal of Reagan's common sense arguments in relation to the "metaphor of Soviet savagery which establishes an interpretive set, or context of assumptions, upon which the remainder of his logic largely depends for its coherence and rhetorical force." If the Soviets were the aggressors in world politics, Reagan could chastise their political decisions even when it might seem unpopular to do so. "Rather than backing away from anti-Soviet rhetoric when it threatens his command over public opinion," notes Ivie, "Reagan as President advances with the intent of making his case against America's number one enemy sound reasonable so that his policies may ultimately prevail."[264]

Skepticism met Reagan's zero option proposal. Various critics went so far as to say it was a disingenuous proposal designed to be rejected. Still, Reagan presented his plan as a reasonable

[264] Ivie, "Speaking 'Common Sense' About the Soviet Threat: Reagan's Rhetorical Stance," 40.

reaction to fear and war perpetrated by the Soviets. He called for the "preservation of peace in Europe" and to "help to bring peace and security to regions now torn by conflict, external intervention, and war."[265] Reagan insisted that there was "no reason why people in any part of the world should have to live in permanent fear of war or its spectre," and that it was time "for all nations to act in a responsible spirit that doesn't threaten other states." America did not perpetrate acts of war or aggression, so the Soviet Union was the entity characterized as war-like and fear-mongering. Through their "external interventions," the Soviets sowed the seeds of discontent and conflict. Furthermore, the Soviets and their allies kept their citizens "oppressed" and "destitute"; they "stripped [their citizens] of human freedom and dignity." In Reagan's eyes, the Soviets were a savage, oppressive group introducing and maintaining conflicts across the globe. In contrast, the US was characterized by benevolent qualities that could be seen in Reagan's zero option proposal. The President called for an "agenda that can help to achieve peace, security, and freedom across the globe." In fact, said Reagan, nothing had "a higher priority for me and for the American people over the coming months and years."

The Soviets were presented as divisive, and their relationship with their allies rooted in a common belief in denying their citizens freedom. Conversely, Reagan offered a picture of the United States as an agent of unity, bonded to its allies through love of freedom and liberty. The "Westminster Address" demonstrated that bond most clearly. Reagan played up the relationship between the US and its allies, and he took care to ruminate on the nature of US-British friendship. The start of the address was framed as a long journey that took "[Reagan] to two great cities of the West, Rome and Paris," then to Versailles for an economic summit which revealed "that even in a time of severe economic strain, free peoples can work together freely and voluntarily to address problems as serious as inflation, unemployment, trade, and economic

[265] Reagan, "Zero Option Address."

development in a spirit of cooperation and solidarity." The President emphasized that if free peoples worked together during hard times, they could work together in good times as well. We know that the speech accentuated a shared sense of unity between Western powers. Kinship among Western powers was important because Reagan's journey was not finished; he would soon travel to Germany where "NATO allies [would] discuss…joint defense[s] and America's latest initiatives for a more peaceful, secure world through arms reductions." The President's rhetoric highlighted the United States' good character through the story of a journey in which Reagan visited friends in order to help keep them safe.

Western countries were friends and partners, but in the "hallowed halls" of Westminster, America had family; there was a sense of "kinship and homecoming."[266] Reagan sought to create common ground between America and Britain through their shared lineage and history of democracy:

> Speaking for all Americans, I want to say how very much at home we feel in your house. Every American would, because this is, as we have been so eloquently told, one of democracy's shrines. Here the rights of free people and the processes of representation have been debated and refined.[267]

Reagan told a story of kinship for a few reasons—chiefly to create a sense of identification between the two countries. Identification was critical to the core message of the speech: The Soviet Union was an enemy that was dangerous to world peace but was destined to fail if the West stood united against it:

> We're approaching the end of a bloody century plagued by a terrible political invention-totalitarianism. Optimism comes less easily today, not because democracy is less

[266] Ronald Reagan, "Address to Members of the British Parliament."
[267] Ibid.

> vigorous, but because democracy's enemies have refined their instruments of repression. Yet optimism is in order, because day by day democracy is proving itself to be a not-at-all-fragile flower. From Stettin on the Baltic to Varna on the Black Sea, the regimes planted by totalitarianism have had more than 30 years to establish their legitimacy. But none—not one regime—has yet been able to risk free elections. Regimes planted by bayonets do not take root.[268]

Reagan described their common enemy in terms that invoked violence and instability. The Soviet Union subscribed to a manner of governmental rule inculcated in a "bloody" history. The US and its allies were characterized by a bond of love for freedom and liberty for all the peoples of the world, while the Soviets were tied to 20th century atrocities and denial of liberty.

As we have seen, the "Westminster Address" connected the Soviet Union to totalitarian regimes known for atrocities, but perhaps no Reagan speech was more direct in its characterization of the Soviets than his "Evil Empire Address." Early Reagan speeches stressed the wrongheadedness, the violence, and the abhorrent nature of communism and its champion, the Soviet Union, but on March 3, 1983, in an address to the National Association of Evangelicals, Reagan shocked many people when he declared the Soviet Union an "Evil Empire." G. Thomas Goodnight notes that in the "Evil Empire Address," Reagan presented "himself as a man of peace working in dialogue with the Soviet leadership….demanding righteousness in the modern world."[269] Through rhetorical devices like "stories, jokes, biblical quotations, and personal revelations," the President "created an ahistorical, dream-like vision of America and world destiny." In turn, he "transformed administration policy from the secular to

[268] Ibid.
[269] Goodnight, "Ronald Reagan's Re-formulation of the Rhetoric of War," 400.

the spiritual realm."[270] Essentially, Reagan tied his good character as a Christian to his policy decisions. The argument, then, was that Reagan's policies were good by virtue of his Christianity.

Reagan began the speech by placing America firmly in the context of being a Christian nation and the better for it. One of Reagan's favorite rhetorical sources was the Founding Fathers, and in this speech, he linked both Christianity and the Founding Fathers. "Freedom prospers only where the blessings of God are avidly sought and humbly accepted," said Reagan:

> The American experiment in democracy rests on this insight. Its discovery was the great triumph of our Founding Fathers, voiced by William Penn when he said: "If we will not be governed by God, we must be governed by tyrants." Explaining the inalienable rights of men, Jefferson said, "The God who gave us life, gave us liberty at the same time." And it was George Washington who said that "of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports."[271]

The President declared his unity with the evangelicals present: "Well, I'm pleased to be here today with you who are keeping America great by keeping her good. Only through your work and prayers and those of millions of others can we hope to survive this perilous century and keep alive this experiment in liberty, this last, best hope of man." By placing himself firmly in lockstep with his audience, he positioned himself in opposition to those would deny the supremacy of American ideologies. On the international front, Reagan positioned himself against the Soviet Union; Reagan and America were good, while the Soviet Union was evil.

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[270] Ibid., 400-401.

[271] Ronald Reagan, "Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals in Orlando, Florida," (speech, Orlando, FL, March 8, 1983), *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=41023; This speech is better known as the "Evil Empire" speech.

Soviet leaders eschewed morality, and embraced the destruction and exploitation of people for their own gain. They did this in part through "repudiate[ing] all morality that proceeds from supernatural ideas—that's their name for religion—or ideas that are outside class conceptions. Morality was subordinate to the interests of class war. And everything is moral that is necessary for the annihilation of the old, exploiting social order and for uniting the proletariat." The Soviets were not evil solely because of their human rights crimes, or even purely on political grounds, but because in addition to those wrongs, they attempted to deny their people access to God. Reagan told a story to emphasize this aspect of communism:

> A number of years ago, I heard a young father, a very prominent young man in the entertainment world, addressing a tremendous gathering in California. It was during the time of the cold war, and communism and our own way of life were very much on people's minds. And he was speaking to that subject. And suddenly, though, I heard him saying, "I love my little girls more than anything "And I said to myself, "Oh, no, don't. You can't—don't say that." But I had underestimated him. He went on: "I would rather see my little girls die now, still believing in God, than have them grow up under communism and one day die no longer believing in God."[272]

Reagan's story played out as a moment of identification for his audience. In it, the Evangelicals present might have recognized aspects of "the sacrifice of Abraham,"[273] wherein God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son Issac. Although it grieved Abraham to do as God instructed, he was willing to kill his son, so great was his love of the Lord. In a similar manner, the father in Reagan's anecdote was willing to see his children die for God's love. Reagan's

[272] Ibid.
[273] Goodnight, "Ronald Reagan's Re-formulation of the Rhetoric of War," 401.

story served to emphasize the magnitude of evil held in the Soviet system that a father would rather his children die than live under the yoke of communism and separated from God.

Reagan doubled down on the connection between communism's denial of God and the evil of such a system: "Yes, let us pray for the salvation of all of those who live in that totalitarian darkness-pray they will discover the joy of knowing God. But until they do, let us be aware that while they preach the supremacy of the state, declare its omnipotence over individual man, and predict its eventual domination of all peoples on the Earth, they are the focus of evil in the modern world."[274] In Reagan's estimation, communism kept people from God, the vilest of acts, and in God's stead was the communist government. The comparisons between the Soviets and the Americans were straightforward: The United States were a collective of moral, just, and good people. The Soviet Union housed an atheistic, oppressive, evil lot of politicians.

The "Evil Empire Address" was perhaps his harshest condemnation and characterization of communism and the Soviet Union, and as such, responses to Reagan's address words were as blunt and unequivocal as the President's words. One editorial expressed "shock" that the President was "a leader willing to divide his people along religious lines so that his 'political philosophy' might prevail."[275] The Soviets responded to Reagan's speech, calling it "'another of his provocative speeches' that proved again that his Administration 'can think only in terms of confrontation and bellicose, lunatic anti-Communism.'"[276] Still, for all of the criticism leveled against the speech, after the "Evil Empire Address," Reagan's poll numbers climbed 5% and generally rose for the rest of 1983.[277]

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[274] Reagan, "Evil Empire."
[275] James M. Wall, "Mr. Reagan Speaks Only to Believers," *Christian Century*, March 23-30, 1983: 259.
[276] Serge Schemann, "Soviet Says Reagan has "'Pathological Hatred,'" *New York Times*, March 10, 1983.
[277] Gerhard Peters, "Presidential Job Approval: Ronald Reagan," *The American Presidency Project*, accessed November 3, 2016, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/data/popularity.php?pres=40.

Reagan could justify rhetoric that leaned heavily on Christian values and the condemnation of the Soviet Union because he saw Christianity and communism as diametrically opposed just as were the US and the Soviet Union. Reagan disagreed that his rhetoric or characterization of the Soviet Union was wrong. The year between Reagan's "Evil Empire" speech and his "Address to the Nation and Other Countries on US-Soviet Relations" did little to change his position on the malicious nature of communism. Reagan introduced his Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), better known as "Star Wars"; the Soviets shot down Korean Air Lines 007, touching off "a storm of anti-Soviet fury" across the United States and the "mood of Congress swung massively in favor of escalation of the arms race"[278]; and in "November 1983 a routine North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) nuclear readiness exercise codenamed Able Archer could have led to a Soviet nuclear strike against the West."[279] The incident was one of the Cold War "situations where the world came closest to nuclear war."[280]

Ahead of Reagan's speech, some critics questioned the make-up of the President's administration, noting that it was filled with current or former military personal, whether "on loan" or in permanent positions. There was a fear that with so many military types around Reagan that it might restrict the kinds of voices that lent counsel on policy decisions.[281] He had always been clear on how he felt about communism, and his first-term Soviet rhetoric reflected those feelings. Still, Reagan sometimes drew declarations of surprise from the Soviets over his criticism of the character of the USSR. In his "Address to the Nation and Other Countries on US-Soviet Relations," Reagan reacted to one of these moments; he chided Soviet leaders for feigning

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[278] Farrel Corcoran "KAL 007 and the Evil Empire: Mediated Disaster and Forms of Rationalization." *Critical Studies In Mass Communication* 3, no. 3 (1986): 297. *Communication & Mass Media Complete*, EBSCO*host*.
[279] Arnav Manchanda, "When Truth is Stranger than Fiction: The Able Archer Incident." *Cold War History* 9, no. 1 (2009): 111-133. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCO*host*.
[280] Manchanda, 111.
[281] Robert. G. Kaiser, "Can We Blame Reagan's Global Woes on Military Men?" *The Washington Post*, January 15, 1984.

surprise at his words because they had "never shied from expressing their view of our system."[282] Reagan described the Soviets as pouting, saying, "We don't refuse to talk when the Soviets" disparage the US, "or because they cling to the fantasy of a Communist triumph over democracy."

The US and Soviet Union must talk, but Reagan insisted that "negotiations deal with real problems, not atmospherics." By atmospherics, Reagan meant following through with promised actions. Reagan had a history of accusing the Soviets of paying lip-service to negotiations and little else, and he noted that "over 2 years ago" he put on the table "the zero option for intermediate-range missiles." Despite the good that such an agreement would bring into the world, the Soviets had ignored it: "Last month the Soviet Defense Minister stated that his country would do everything to avert the threat of war. Well, these are encouraging words, but now is the time to move from words to deed. The opportunity for progress in arms control exists. The Soviet leaders should take advantage of it." The character of the Soviet Union was impugned. Although the Soviets had the chance to put the world in a safer place, it did not.

Reagan chastised the Soviets for what he saw as a lack of good character. The "rest of the world waited for a safer existence," yet the Soviets "broke off negotiations on intermediate-range nuclear forces" without setting "a date for the resumption of the talks on strategic arms and on conventional forces in Europe." Reagan's narrative exposed the self-centered nature of the Soviets. They walked away from negotiations that would make the entire world safer because they did not care about the rest of the world. In comparison, the United States displayed excellent character. The Americans were eager to "negotiate in good faith" and to "return to the

[282] Reagan, "Address to the Nation and Other Countries on US-Soviet Relations."

negotiating table to work toward" arms agreements." Furthermore, the Americans were willing to compromise and "meet them halfway[283] during arms negotiations.

Reagan argued that a chance at reducing tension and danger in the world was there for the taking, yet the Soviet Union balked, extending years of conflict in regions of the world and a general sense of unease worldwide. The Russians exacerbated a number of global problems: They "introduce[ed] sophisticated weapons" into hotspots of violence in the Middle East and "created mistrust and ill will" through human rights violations. Reagan sought healthy competition between the two superpowers because competition would "bring out the best in us" and "in the Soviet Union." The challenge was not a threat to the Soviet Union, declared Reagan: "Freedom poses no threat. It is the language of progress."[284] Reagan's statement was an explicit reassurance to the Soviets and an implicit jab at communism; if freedom was the language of progress, then communism was, at best, the language of stagnation, and at worst, the language of regression.

As always, Reagan was clear that the oppressive Soviet government deserved the West's disdain, not the people trapped in communist countries. Reagan used dissociation to separate Soviet citizens from their government, because it allowed him to negotiate the "incompatibilities"[285] of damning a people oppressed by their government even if the citizens were, at least in name, Soviets. The Soviet people wanted basic human rights:

> People want to raise their children in a world without fear and without war. They want to have some of the good things over and above bare subsistence that make life worth living. They want to work at some craft, trade, or profession that gives them satisfaction and a sense of worth. Their common interests cross all borders.

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[283] Ibid.
[284] Ibid.
[285] Chaim Perelman, *The Realm of Rhetoric* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982): 126.

In Reagan's estimation, communism worked against fulfilling any of these desires, but democracy provided a blueprint for satisfying such needs. The Soviet Union could easily follow the blueprint: "If the Soviet Government wants peace, then there will be peace. Together we can strengthen peace, reduce the level of arms, and know in doing so that we have helped fulfill the hopes and dreams of those we represent and, indeed, of people everywhere. Let us begin now."[286] Reagan connected arms policy to peace, and peace to better lives for everyone. It stood to reason, then, that acquiescing to Reagan's arms policies would bring about a better world. It was a message typically Reagan: there was a simple answer to a complex situation, but it was not an easy one, at least not for the Soviets.

Ahead of the address, Reagan's aides said it would be "a major conciliatory speech on US-Soviet relations."[287] Some in the media conjectured that it might be "designed to calm domestic fears about a new Cold War during an election year as much as to wave an olive branch at the Soviet Union." Indeed, after the address, critics said the tone of Reagan's speech was "softer" but that his stance on US-Soviet disagreements did not change in a substantive way.[288] Immediately following his "Address to the Nation and Other Countries on US-Soviet Relations," Reagan enjoyed a bump from 52% job approval to 55%.[289] Polls aside, there was a sense that Reagan's Soviet rhetoric had changed, but only in terms of aesthetics, not substance. In fact, some "senior officials [were] not convinced" that Reagan's mildly conciliatory tone indicated that he had changed his stance toward the Soviets; the "anti-Soviet instincts of Reagan and some

[286] Reagan, "Address to the Nation and Other Countries on US-Soviet Relations."
[287] Benjamin Taylor, "Speech Designed to Dampen Cold War Fear," *Boston Globe*, January 16, 1984.
[288] Rich Jaroslovsky, "Reagan Softens Tone in Address on Soviets but Doesn't Alter the Substance of Policies," *Wall Street Journal*, January 17, 1984.
[289] Gerhard Peters, "Presidential Job Approval: Ronald Reagan," *The American Presidency Project*, accessed November 3, 2016, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/data/popularity.php?pres=40.

of his closest advisors" were so strong that might "easily and quickly re-emerge."[290] Reagan's rhetoric was less harsh than in the past, yet the "speech gave no indication that he had gone 'soft'" as he "still strongly criticized Moscow's record of human rights, its military involvement in Syria and military intervention in Afghanistan and its taking advantage of arms control agreements." The Soviets thought little of Reagan's rhetoric and pointed out that though the President's tone may have softened, he still insisted that the Soviets were not trustworthy and that the US would continue negotiating from a place of military strength.[291]

Eventual Triumph Over the Soviet Union

In Reagan's rhetoric, the Soviet Union was a nation intent, not upon improving relations and safety in the world, but on clinging to power even as it made disingenuous declarations about desiring peace. The Soviets were careful not to allow its people freedom and choice because it could lead to communism's downfall. Reagan was sure the Soviet Union would not survive for long in its present state, and he argued that there were some political actions needed to assure eventual triumph over Soviet communism. The eventual fall of the Soviet Union would come, but for all of his confidence, Reagan also believed the West needed to usher along the end of the Soviets lest they take advantage of Western inaction.

Reagan was particularly adamant about both the inevitable fall of the Soviet Union and the need for the West to help along communism's demise in his "Westminster Address." The Soviets' tenuous hold on their power needed only for the democratic West to pry loose a few fingers and the Soviet communist system would plunge into the abyss of history, leaving democracy to carry on. Reagan called for cultivating the growth of democracy and culling

[290] M. Getler, "Reaction to Speech," *Boston Globe*, January 17, 1984.
[291] Jack Nelson, "Soviets Call Reagan Talk Propaganda," *Los Angeles Times*, January 17, 1984.

communism through a "campaign for democracy"[292]: "No, democracy is not a fragile flower. Still it needs cultivating. If the rest of this century is to witness the gradual growth of freedom and democratic ideals, we must take actions to assist the campaign for democracy." The US and Britain, and indeed, the West, would be active agents in vanquishing communism:

> While we must be cautious about forcing the pace of change, we must not hesitate to declare our ultimate objectives and to take concrete actions to move toward them. We must be staunch in our conviction that freedom is not the sole prerogative of a lucky few, but the inalienable and universal right of all human beings….The objective I propose is quite simple to state: to foster the infrastructure of democracy, the system of a free press, unions, political parties, universities, which allows a people to choose their own way to develop their own culture, to reconcile their own differences through peaceful means.[293]

The West would foster democratic ideals throughout the world, and in turn, the communist system, already weak and failing, would succumb to the inevitable destruction of its own malevolent ways, so strong was the righteousness of democracy. The President's belief in the viability of his plan was not without merit: "What I am describing now is a plan and a hope for the long term—the march of freedom and democracy which will leave Marxism-Leninism on the ash heap of history as it has left other tyrannies which stifle the freedom and muzzle the self-expression of the people." The historical record was full of totalitarian regimes who oppressed their people, only to eventually fall to the rectitude of democratic ideals.

The Soviets were a threat to peace and freedom, and the "mission" of the day for democratic society was "to preserve freedom as well as peace." The world had come to "a turning point" in history:

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[292] Ronald Reagan, "Address to Members of the British Parliament."
[293] Ibid.

> In an ironic sense Karl Marx was right. We are witnessing today a great revolutionary crisis, a crisis where the demands of the economic order are conflicting directly with those of the political order. But the crisis is happening not in the free, non-Marxist West, but in the home of Marxist-Leninism, the Soviet Union. It is the Soviet Union that runs against the tide of history by denying human freedom and human dignity to its citizens. It also is in deep economic difficulty. The rate of growth in the national product has been steadily declining since the Fifties and is less than half of what it was then.

The Soviets were mired in a fight against history fueled by a fierce desire to cling to a system of government doomed to fail. There were tangible consequences to their position—their economy was failing and had been for decades. The Soviet system was an experiment in failure, and its eventual demise was not a surprise to democratic society:

> Wherever the comparisons have been made between free and closed societies-West Germany and East Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia, Malaysia and Vietnam—it is the democratic countries that are prosperous and responsive to the needs of their people. And one of the simple but overwhelming facts of our time is this: Of all the millions of refugees we've seen in the modern world, their flight is always away from, not toward the Communist world. Today on the NATO line, our military forces face east to prevent a possible invasion. On the other side of the line, the Soviet forces also face east to prevent their people from leaving.[294]

Democratic societies were the on the right side of history because of the freedoms their people enjoyed. Conversely, the Soviets were on the wrong side of history, as evidenced by the constant attempts by their people to flee to democratic countries. The communists, despite the protestations of their citizens, would not change. In fact, the Soviets had to use military might to

[294] Ibid.

coerce their people into remaining in their countries. Use of force to detain people and take away their right to self-determination was antithetical to democratic ideals. Thus, in Reagan's narrative, the Soviets betrayed a sense of a desperation linked to a doomed system of government and a desire to illegitimately hold on to their station as the rulers of their country and those under their sphere of influence.

Reagan was clear why the Soviet Union would one day vanish, and he admonished his audience to recognize and remember that the conflict between the US and Soviet Union was always one of good versus evil. Reagan urged people not to "place the United States in a position of military and moral inferiority," to "beware…the temptation of blithely declaring yourselves above it all and label both sides equally at fault, to ignore the facts of history and the aggressive impulses of an evil empire, to simply call the arms race a giant misunderstanding and thereby remove yourself from the struggle between right and wrong and good and evil.[295] Americans would have to choose sides in the conflict between the US and Soviet Union; they could not sit on the fence, so to speak. Reagan defined such inaction as "simple-minded appeasement," and as Reagan's audience knew from Hitler's actions in World War II, appeasement was a dangerous and unethical choice. It was clear who was right and who was wrong in Reagan's narrative. Fence sitting was the realm of pure politics, and this conflict was greater than a disagreement between governments; it was both political and spiritual.

Reagan was sure he knew who would win the conflict between democratic and communist systems if the West would "rise to the challenge" of standing against the Soviet Union. To Reagan, communism was "another sad, bizarre chapter in human history." The President thought it would be a short entry in the history books, for according to Reagan,

[295] Reagan, "Evil Empire."

communism's "last pages even now are being written."[296] The Soviet Union was a force of evil in its last throes, clinging to an unsustainable system of repression, but like a wounded animal, it was dangerous and could not be dismissed out-of-hand.[297]

If the West allowed communism to thrive with little intervention, the world might be made "safer" through uneasy, tenuous agreements between the West and communist countries. As Reagan made clear in his "Address to the Nation and Other Countries on US-Soviet Relations," that "safer" was not "safe enough."[298] To be safe enough required reducing the number of nuclear weapons and finding a way to improve America's "working relationship with the Soviet Union." Reagan proposed that the only "rational alternative" to armed conflict with the Soviet Union was "credible deterrence and peaceful competition." The President was clear that the US and the USSR would not be friends, that there was a great disparity "between our two societies and our philosophies," and in fact, he advocated for continued rivalry, albeit a peaceful one. Reagan did not believe that peace was close at hand as he noted that there were only "opportunities for peace" in the year ahead. He advocated that the superpowers "do more to find areas of mutual interest and then build on them" and "find ways to reduce, and eventually to eliminate, the threat and use of force in solving international disputes."[299]

If the Soviet Union was such a force of discord and discontentment in the world, and the US and USSR had different philosophies, it stood to reason that America was a force for harmony and contentment. Reagan claimed that there must be some cooperation between the US and Soviet Union, but that the immense "gap in American and Soviet perceptions and policy is

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[296] Ibid.
[297] Rowland and Jones note that at the time of the speech, few critics agreed "that the survival of the Soviet Union was in doubt," but that in the years after the fall of the Soviet Union, many critics named the speech prescient (15-17).
[298] Reagan, "Address to the Nation and Other Countries on US-Soviet Relations."
[299] Ibid.

so great that our immediate objective must be more modest." The first step was setting up a mutual examination of "actions that we both can take to reduce the risk of U.S.-Soviet confrontation." The superpowers could reach a peaceable compromise, but its success would depend on the Soviet's willingness to set aside their aggressive, exploitive ways for actions more in line with what Reagan claimed America did—respond to conflict, not create it. In part, the Soviet Union could fall in line with American sentiments to "reduce the vast stockpiles of armaments in the world," which Reagan said could "reverse the vicious cycle of threat and response which drives arms races everywhere it occurs." The US had already done so on its own, and if the Soviet Union would follow suit, it would "provide greater stability, and build confidence" in the future of a peaceful world.[300]

In conjunction with reducing arms, Reagan proposed "a better working relationship" with the Soviet Union. The key to the new relationship was "greater cooperation and understanding." The Soviet Union would have to change its ways though, as Reagan pointed out through a series of antithetical statements:

> Complying with agreements helps; violating them hurts. Respecting the rights of individual citizens bolsters the relationship; denying these rights harms it. Expanding contacts across borders and permitting a free exchange or interchange of information and ideas increase confidence; sealing off one's people from the rest of the world reduces it. Peaceful trade helps, while organized theft of industrial secrets certainly hurts.

Reagan used parallel structure to condemn Soviet acts and emphasize the differences between US and USSR ideologies. Reagan marked the Soviets with negative descriptors; the communists violated, harmed, held hostages, and thieved. Reagan plainly called the Soviets untrustworthy, saying of "Soviet compliance with agreements and treaties" that "there's been mounting

[300] Ibid.

evidence that provisions of agreements have been violated and that advantage has been taken of ambiguities in our agreements." He stated that it was "clear that [America] cannot simply assume that agreements negotiated will be fulfilled." It was the Soviet actions of the past that kept "our relationship with the Soviet Union" from being "what it should be."[301] Clearly, the Soviet Union would have to make significant changes to reach a point where Reagan thought a Russian-American relationship would be fruitful.

Nonetheless, Reagan was willing to try to build a relationship with the Soviets, although America would "have to start in small ways." To achieve a relationship, said Reagan, he would follow "three guiding principles—realism, strength, and dialogue." First, "We must recognize that we are in a long-term competition with a government that does not share our notions of individual liberties at home and peaceful change abroad. We must be frank in acknowledging our differences and unafraid to promote our values." Second, strength encompassed military, economic, and spiritual power, and that "strength is necessary to deter war and to facilitate negotiated solutions. Soviet leaders know it makes sense to compromise only if they can get something in return. Well, America can now offer something in return." Third, "Strength and dialog go hand in hand, and we're determined to deal with our differences peacefully through negotiations. We're prepared to discuss the problems that divide us and to work for practical, fair solutions on the basis of mutual compromise. We will never retreat from negotiations." Reagan's guiding principles were unflinching declarations of an American strength that allowed for negotiation and action from a position of superiority.

Throughout the address, Reagan stressed that if the Soviets followed America's lead, they could improve their citizens' lives, and that the most important thing in a US-Soviet relationship would be an improvement in peoples' quality of life. Reagan insisted that although the US and

[301] Ibid.

Soviet Union had different political philosophies, its peoples were the same. The speech contained an extended hypothetical example of the commonality of American and Russian people in which the fictional couples, "Ivan and Anya" and "Jim and Sally," discovered how much they had in common. The example created identification between Reagan's audience and the Soviet people. Just as he had in the "Zero Option Address," Reagan employed rhetorical questions to make an argument. Reagan asked if the couples would "debate the differences between their respective governments? Or would they find themselves comparing notes about their children and what each other did for a living?" The answer was that they would talk about their children because American and Soviet citizens were far more alike than the American and Soviet systems of government. The rhetorical questions were an implicit indictment of Soviet communism. Reagan's narrative of Ivan, Anya, Jim, and Sally reinforced the stark contrasts between communism and democracy. The Soviet and American couples got along easily and naturally; they shared the common bond of humanity. Communist and democratic systems did not get along; they had vastly different views of how a government might intersect with humanity. Communist ideology generated the conflict between itself and democracy because it was corrupt and bent on keeping a small number of people in control of a large group of people. The nature of communism would lead to the downfall of the Soviet Union. The US simply had to advance the cause of democracy in the world at the same time it halted the march of communism while the West waited for the USSR to fail.

Conclusion

Reagan's first-term speeches were clear indictments of the Soviet Union. His historical narrative presented the Soviets as villains on the world stage, emphasizing their historically oppressive nature, untrustworthiness, lying ways, exploitative practices, and the danger they

presented to the rest of the world. As a Soviet foil, America's history of eschewing power and oppression for a position as a defender of liberty and a friend to the world emphasized the antagonistic narrative of the Soviets. Reagan's historical narrative was effective because he could compare the superpowers, clearly demonstrating evil and good. In like manner, Reagan's characterization of the Soviets and the US as antithetical to one another enhanced the bad characteristics of the Soviet Union and the good characteristics of America. The President both explicitly and implicitly denounced the Soviet Union, plainly calling them evil at times. He contrasted the evil of communist Russia with the good of democratic America, and in doing so, Reagan created a protagonist defending against the Russian antagonist. Both narrative and character pointed toward Reagan's ultimate declaration that the Soviet Union could not survive in its present incarnation if the democratic West worked to ensure the USSR's downfall. Ideological attack and careful defense against Soviet expansion would guarantee that the Soviet Union's existence would be short-lived, for the communist system was on the wrong side of history.

Reagan's use of historical narrative, discussion of the social, political, and moral character of the US, the Soviets, and their allies, illumination of the actions needed to assure the West's eventual triumph over Soviet communism were effective. Reagan reinforced the Soviet Union's place as a global antagonist, and the Soviets' did little to change that perception. It certainly seemed that the Soviet's would maintain their place as the bad guys in Reagan's narrative. The President's Soviet rhetoric squarely placed the USSR on the road to ruin and declared that they meant to bring the rest of the world down with them. Thus, when Reagan's rhetoric changed in his second term, creating a Soviet redemption story, it illuminated how rhetoric might make new relationships out of old oppositions.

Chapter Four

Ronald Reagan's first-term Soviet rhetoric had its roots in his pre-presidential rhetoric, and its invention was influenced by previous Cold War political rhetoric. The Soviets were still villains who sought to expand communism, disrupt peace in the world, and unduly influence weaker countries. The communists had a history of human rights abuses, despicable and disreputable social and political actions, and global antagonism. According to Reagan's rhetoric, the Soviets were irredeemable; their decades of antagonistic words and reprehensible deeds revealed a morally bankrupt government. Given the history of Soviet actions and the place of the USSR on the world stage, one would expect that Reagan's second-term Soviet rhetoric would approximate his first-term rhetoric, yet that was not the case. In his second term, Reagan presented his audience with the story of a Soviet Union that, although deeply flawed, was redeemable.

In this chapter, I chart Reagan's redemptive narrative through recurring strategies in four of his second-term speeches.[302] First, Reagan used historical narratives by comparing past and present Soviet words and actions in a way that illustrated Soviet change. Second, Reagan made appeals to reciprocity as a way to establish a US-Soviet partnership that would bridge political differences, build trust, and demonstrate a place for the Soviets as global companions. Third, he presented Mikhail Gorbachev as a synecdoche for the Soviet Union because Gorbachev represented a new way of Soviet thinking and the best chance for Soviet change and redemption.

This chapter proceeds in three parts: First, I briefly review and define Reagan's three rhetorical strategies. Second, I do a chronological analysis of the speeches and the

[302] "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress Following the Soviet-United States Summit Meeting in Geneva" (11/21/1985); "Address to the Nation in the Meetings With Soviet General Secretary Gorbachev in Iceland" (10/13/1986); "Remarks to Members of the Royal Institute of Foreign Affairs" (6/3/1988); and "Farewell Address" (1/11/1989).

aforementioned strategies, demonstrating how Reagan developed and sustained an overall narrative that justified a reversal of his position. Last, I review the Soviet redemption narrative in the context of Reagan's second-term.

Rhetorical Strategies

Reagan's second-term Soviet redemption narrative relied on the interdependent, tripartite rhetorical strategies of historical narrative, reciprocity, and synecdoche. The Soviets' past actions affected how the US perceived and reacted to current Soviet words and deeds. In turn, US-Soviet reciprocity, with its call for transparency, proceeded from both past and present Soviet actions. The conduit of that reciprocity was the blossoming relationship between Reagan and Gorbachev. Gorbachev represented a new way of Soviet thinking, and as the Soviet leader, he became a synecdoche for what Reagan hoped would be a different Soviet state.

The underpinnings of Reagan's second-term narrative were the historical actions of the Soviet Union. Reagan had told the story of the antagonistic Soviet Union for decades; thus, the historical narrative necessarily affected Reagan's Soviet interactions. We might think of narratives as linear, but they are temporally complex. Historical narratives have an "anachronistically dual perspective," for a "defining feature of narrativity" is that as "one event [is] being described, a later one [is] being referred to proleptically." Thus, the "essence" of a historical narrative is that the "significance of one moment is deferred to another point in time.[303]" In historical narratives, the storyteller fashions "intertextual relationships" between past, present, and future narratives, and in doing so, "lend[s] legitimacy" to the present story.[304] The past becomes a strategic resource "providing a setting and an expressive pattern for

[303] Ann Rigney, "When the Monograph is No Longer the Medium: Historical Narrative in the Online Age," *History & Theory* 49, no. 4 (2010): 100-117. *Historical Abstracts*, EBSCO*host*.
[304] Benjamin Gatling, "Historical Narrative, Intertextuality, and Cultural Continuity in Post-Soviet Tajikistan," *Journal Of Folklore Research* 53, no. 1-4 (2016): 41-65. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCO*host*.

discussions that transform both past and present."[305] So it was with Reagan's second-term Soviet narrative. The President's previous Soviet narrative, and the Soviets' past words and actions, lent credibility and gravity to his new rhetoric. Perhaps most significantly, Reagan's rhetoric somewhat countered his previous proleptic declarations of an irredeemable Soviet antagonist. Reagan's second-term rhetoric was decidedly more optimistic, although guarded; the old Soviet narrative remained true, and it complicated the present Soviet narrative.

Reagan needed to mediate the complicated Soviet narrative. One way to do that was to build mutual trust between the US and the USSR, so he turned to appeals of reciprocity. Reagan called for open and frank deliberation on social and political differences, cultural and educational exchange programs, and non-combative military and political interactions. Each side would treat the other as they wished to be treated. Reciprocity arguments are effective because they "rely upon a perceived symmetry that has a certain inherent appeal"[306]; they "claim the same treatment for the antecedent as for the consequent of a relation – buyers-sellers, spectators-actors, etc.," based on the presupposition that the "relation is symmetrical."[307] Reagan's turn toward reciprocity arguments was unique because his antecedent Soviet rhetoric clearly placed either the US or the USSR in a position of advantage; their relationship was not symmetrical. As such, there was never a sense of equality or trust between the superpowers.

The fresh US-Soviet interplay had not occurred in the past because of two reasons: One, Gorbachev's predecessors did not possess his desire for reform. Two, even had they that desire, they died in such rapid succession that Reagan had no chance to establish meaningful

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[305] Charles L. Briggs, *Competence in Performance: The Creativity of Tradition in Mexicano Verbal Art* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), 99.
[306] Barbara Warnick and Susan L. Kline, "The New Rhetoric's Argument Schemes: A Rhetorical View of Practical Reasoning," *Argumentation and Advocacy* 29 no. 1 (1992): 1. *Academic OneFile*.
[307] Chaim Perelman, "The New Rhetoric: a Theory of Practical Reasoning," in *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present*, eds. Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg (New York: Bedford, 2000), 1397-1398.

relationships with them. Gorbachev sought to enact reforms in ways that no previous Soviet leader had. In Gorbachev, Reagan found a politician who embodied a new Soviet way of thinking, and as such, Reagan took the chance to create of Gorbachev, a synecdoche for the Soviet Union. Burke defines synecdoche as the "part for the whole, whole for the part, container for the contained, sign for the thing signified."[308] Synecdoche is a form of reduction and representation.[309] Thus, in Reagan's second-term rhetoric, Gorbachev became a symbol for the whole of the Soviet Union. His willingness to enter into sincere deliberation, reform Soviet polices, and interact with the United States in ways his predecessors did not signaled a significant change in the Soviet Union writ large and constituted in Gorbachev. The Soviet leader became the lynchpin in Reagan's tripartite rhetorical strategy and a central character in the Soviet redemption narrative.

Analysis

In the time between Reagan's "Address to the Nation and Other Countries on US-Soviet Relations" in January 1984 and his "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress Following the Soviet-United States Summit Meeting in Geneva" ("Geneva Address") in November 1985, there were a number of significant Cold War events: The Soviet Union and various allies boycotted the 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles, with the Soviets citing "chauvinistic sentiments and an anti-Soviet hysteria being whipped up in the United States"[310] as reasons for the boycott. On August 11, 1984, Reagan made a joke at a sound check before his weekly radio address: "My fellow Americans, I'm pleased to tell you today that I've signed legislation that will outlaw Russia forever. We begin bombing in five minutes." The joke did not go out over the air

[308] Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1969): 507.
[309] Ibid.
[310] John F. Burns, "Moscow Will Keep Its Team From Los Angeles Olympics; Tass Cites Peril, U.S. Denies It; Protests Are Issue," *New York Times*, May 9, 1984.

but was later leaked. The Soviets decried the joke as "monstrous" and said "it showed the insincerity of U.S. calls for improved relations with Moscow."[311] Most germane to this study, there was rapid upheaval in Soviet leadership as Yuri Andropov died in February 1984, followed by Konstantin Chernenko in March 1985, and Mikhail Gorbachev took the mantle of General Secretary with Chernenko's death. Talks on the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) and Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) treaties, and space weapons, dubbed the Nuclear and Space Talks (NST), were set to begin again, and Reagan firmly believed that his policies and the growing US military strength made it a perfect moment to start negotiations with the new Soviet leader. Nancy Reagan bolstered his beliefs, and per her desire to see her husband remembered as a peace-maker, supported Reagan's commitment to US-Soviet negotiations.[312]

Gorbachev's rise to power offered a new opportunity for US-Soviet relations. Gorbachev was far younger than his predecessors, well-educated, familiar with Western Europe, and sought social and political reform in the Soviet Union. Gorbachev wanted reforms because he recognized that the Soviet Union's economic position in the world was rapidly falling behind that of the West.[313] Strengthening the Soviet economy was a priority for Gorbachev, and he had the education, experience, and negotiating skills to succeed in his goals. He was, according to Soviet statesman Andrei Gromyko, driven to leave failed Soviet policies in the past and had been picked as the General Secretary because of his experience, critical mind, and rhetorical

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[311] "Soviets Assail Reagan for 'Monstrous' Joke," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, August 16, 1984, accessed May 6, 2016, https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1129&dat=19840816&id=6NVRAAAAIBAJ&sjid=Hm4DAAAAIBAJ&pg=3722,4149076&hl=en.

[312] Lawrence Wittner, *The Struggle Against the Bomb: Toward Nuclear Abolition*, vol. 3 (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 389.

[313] David Reynolds, *Summits: Six Meetings That Shaped the Twentieth Century* (New York: Praeger Books, 2007), 352.

acumen.[314] Reagan invited Gorbachev for a summit between the two superpowers—the first in six years—and Gorbachev agreed.

Almost immediately after ascending to the Soviet premiership, Gorbachev "expound[ed] on the dangers and irrationality of nuclear weapons and the need for improved East-West relations."[315] He was particularly critical of Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), a missile defense system that used both ground and orbital platforms to protect against a strategic nuclear weapon attack. Gorbachev claimed SDI "threatened to undermine the nuclear balance and unleash a new race in offensive missiles," and he sought Western support for his resistance to a renewed arms race. Ahead of the US-Soviet summit in Geneva, Switzerland scheduled for November, many of America's European allies echoed Gorbachev's reticence about SDI. Fears that at best "SDI would never produce results commensurate with its promise and its cost," and that at worst, it would "damage the strategic unity" and "undermine the arrangements that had served Europe so well," plagued Reagan.[316] Thus as the Geneva summit neared, it became clear that arms control would rule the day at the November meeting.[317]

Further complicating the forthcoming summit was Gorbachev's growing global popularity, for Reagan wanted to argue the Soviets were still a threat to global well-being, yet even "U.S. officials" admitted "Gorbachev's success in establishing Soviet positions [on arms control] as moderate and reasonable."[318] Reagan had reason to believe the Geneva summit would produce favorable results for US-Soviet relations. Secretary of State George Shultz had been

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[314] *Anatoly S. Chernyaev*, *Diary of Anatoly Chernyaen*, *1985*. (http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB192/Chernyaev_Diary_translation_1985.pdf).

[315] Norman A. Graebner, Richard Dean Burns, and Joseph M. Siracusa, *Reagan, Bush, and Gorbachev: Revisiting the End of the Cold War* (Westport, CT: Preager Security International: 2008), 68.

[316] Graebner, Burns, and Siracusa, 68-69; See also, David Service, *The End of the Cold War: 1985-1991* (New York: Public Affairs, 2015), 121-122.

[317] Reagan also desired that the Soviets improve their human rights record, although that topic seemed secondary to arms control; See Service, *The End of the Cold War*, 152.

[318] Graebner, Burns, and Siracusa, 69.

involved in preliminary negotiations with the Soviets—back-channel, "quiet diplomacy"—and he reported to Reagan that the Russians were willing to advance a friendlier relationship with the US; the summit would be the chance for a fresh start between the superpowers.[319] In advance of the Geneva summit, Gorbachev proved to be a different kind of Soviet leader. Vice President George Bush and Shultz described Gorbachev as "healthy and ebullient"[320]; in March 1985, the Soviet leader sent a letter to Reagan requesting "an end to the practice of saying one thing to each other in confidence and something different in public"[321]; in April, he announced that the USSR would abandon plans to deploy additional SS-20 missiles in Europe; and in August, Gorbachev proposed a five-month unilateral moratorium on the testing of nuclear weapons starting on the 40th anniversary of the Hiroshima atomic bombing.[322]

Gorbachev's actions were both refreshing and frustrating for Reagan. The President "recognized that something extraordinary was happening in the Kremlin," but the Soviet Premier's actions and popularity, especially with the Western nations, were obstacles to his traditionally hardline, anti-Soviet rhetoric. Unlike previous Russian leaders, Gorbachev was affable and charming, and he "understood the uses of personality at least as well as Reagan did."[323] In an effort to counter the Soviet leader's popularity, Reagan demanded "evidence" that Gorbachev's policy reformations were "more than an ephemeral ploy."[324] Not willing to accept Gorbachev's gestures on faith, the Reagan administration insisted that the only way for the Soviets to prove their good intentions was "practice" not "promises." Reagan pointed to the

[319] Reynolds, *Summits: Six Meetings That Shaped the Twentieth Century*, 363-364.
[320] Service, 123.
[321] Ibid. 126.
[322] Myron S. Waldman, "U.S., Soviets Snub Nuclear Bids," *Newsday*, Jul 30, 1985, Nassau edition.
[323] John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: Penguin Group, 2005): 229.
[324] Service, 138.

Soviet presence in Afghanistan as one example of Gorbachev's suspect rhetoric.[325] In another instance, the Reagan administration dismissed Gorbachev's call for a moratorium on nuclear weapons testing as "'propaganda' and 'unverifiable.'"[326] In truth, Reagan, who feared the destructive power of nuclear weapons, rejected Gorbachev's proposal "mainly because it would have halted work on SDI."[327]

Reagan resisted publically praising Gorbachev, and privately, his stance on the schedule for the Geneva negotiations concerned the Soviet leader. The Americans wanted to "concentrate on strategic nuclear weapons," while the Soviets "insisted on including intermediate-range missiles…in the discussion"; further, the Soviets raised objections to "American foreign bases for its nuclear forces as well as to the Strategic Defense Initiative." Reagan's negotiating team "refused to give way and insisted that all categories of bombs, missiles and vehicles should be taken separately and in sequence."[328] Gorbachev was frustrated by the Americans' unwillingness to negotiate beyond nuclear weapons, and he "came to Geneva bristling with distrust," claiming the US was leveraging the arms race to weaken the Soviet state.[329] Gorbachev was correct; Reagan believed that SDI was a strong bargaining chip for gaining concessions from the Soviets, and he would not trade it away.[330] Reagan's resistance to giving in to the Soviets on the focus of the arms talks was in part purely political, and in part his "insistence on personal control [of] Soviet-American diplomacy."[331] The President understood that Gorbachev's rule offered an

[325] Ibid., 138.
[326] Waldman, "U.S., Soviets Snub Nuclear Bids."
[327] Dockrill and Hopkins, *The Cold War*, 147.
[328] Service, *The End of the Cold War: 1985-1991*, 122-123.
[329] Gaddis, 230.
[330] Brands *Reagan: The Life*, 506
[331] Mann, *The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan*, 90-91.

opportunity to advance US-Soviet relations to new ground, and he was going to take advantage of the situation for political gain.[332]

After the summit, some of Reagan's speechwriters wanted to include deprecating language about the Soviets and Gorbachev in the "Geneva Address," but Reagan refused.[333] He liked Gorbachev and felt the meeting was productive. Furthermore, Reagan thought Gorbachev was a leader with whom he could work. In Gorbachev, Reagan saw "a remarkable leader determined to change the economic and political landscape of the U.S.S.R. for the better."[334]

Geneva Address

The "Geneva Address" was the moment Reagan pivoted from his previous tale. The Soviets became a group with whom the US could negotiate, although Reagan cautiously acquiesced to that line of thinking. The address stands as the touchstone speech against which I analyze the other speeches in this chapter. Reagan began the third act, or the resolution, of his Soviet narrative in the "Geneva Address." It introduced the important character of Mikhail Gorbachev and depicted points of conflict and resolution with the Soviet Union. The "Geneva Address" set the foundation for Reagan's narrative change by introducing the rhetorical strategies of arguments from reciprocity and synecdoche, as well as continuing arguments from historical narrative.

Reagan's established anti-communist persona, and his previous Soviet rhetoric, called into question the veracity of his narration. To overcome this rhetorical obstacle, Reagan positioned himself as a reliable narrator early in the speech by adopting a news reporter's neutrality and trustworthiness, declaring, "Maybe it's the old broadcaster in me, but I decided to file my own report directly to you." Tapping into the reporter's *ethos* served two purposes: First,

[332] Ibid., 91.
[333] Reynolds, *Summits: Six Meetings That Shaped the Twentieth Century*, 383.
[334] Graebner, Burns, and Siracusa, *Reagan, Bush, Gorbachev: Revisiting the End of the Cold War*, 93.

Reagan's comments and declarations became both points of fact and narrative elements. Second, it became the ascendant story of what happened at Geneva; Reagan combated "3,000 opinions" proffered by the "over 3,000 reporters in Geneva"[335] with his truth.

Although Reagan's second-term narrative was not a linear tale of progression, the "Geneva Address" demarcated that which came before and that which Reagan hoped would come after. From the start of the speech, Reagan chose phrases that signaled that demarcation. He "called for a fresh start"; declared that he and Gorbachev "[understood] each other better"; and claimed the meeting was "constructive." A fresh start implies that something has grown stale, rotten, or old; if something is better, it has come from something worse; and constructive is a term that denotes the building of something from nothing. Reagan looked to history to inform his rhetorical decisions in the present and his hope for the future of US-Soviet relations. Past Soviet deeds were the locus of invention for Reagan's current rhetoric. The complicated temporal aspects of Reagan's historical narrative were unavoidable because narrative is a "strategy for coming to terms with time, process, and change."[336] In the "Geneva Address," historical narrative ceased being solely about the Soviets' past misdeeds; it could also be a tool for demonstrating change through comparing past Soviet bad acts with current better, or good, acts.

Reagan did not incorporate a wholesale change in his use of historical narrative. Rather, he continued to employ arguments from historical narrative to link past and present Soviet misdeeds while challenging the Soviets to take steps to change further the narrative. Reagan demonstrated the contrast between a historical narrative that continued as it always had and one

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[335] Ronald Reagan, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress Following the Soviet-United States Summit Meeting in Geneva," (speech, Washington, DC, November 21, 1985), *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=38088.

[336] David Herman, "Introduction," in *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 3.

that postulated what that narrative might look like with positive change from the Soviets. Early on, Reagan established that the Soviets' previous bad actions and refusal to change made negotiating a difficult proposition: "You can't imagine how much it means in dealing with the Soviets to have the Congress, the allies, and the American people firmly behind you."[337] The comment reinforced the magnitude and scope of the past on present US-Soviet cooperation. The office of the President commanded respect, and Americans expected their leader to be a capable diplomat. So, when Reagan acknowledged that American support was helpful, he revealed the magnitude of difficulty in navigating negotiations that were hindered by history. Further, by constituting Americans as his confederates, the President implied that US citizens shared the results of the summit. The audience already knew the summit was more successful than many thought it might be. Thus, the American audience shared in the victories of the summit.

One of those victories was a subtle change in the course of the historical narrative, or, the aforementioned "fresh start" in US-Soviet relations. Reagan called for a fresh start because US-Soviet relations were long-stagnant. Reagan and Gorbachev did not have "a meeting of the minds on such fundamentals as ideology or national purpose," so different were the US and Soviet positions. Both history and ideology assured the superpowers would not would not reach a consensus, but significantly, they had come to better understand one another, and that was "a key to peace." Each leader had "gained a better perspective" of the other, which seemed to open up previously closed channels of negotiation. Reagan and Gorbachev exchanged, and accepted, mutual invitations to visit each other's country. Agreeing to meet multiple times for the sake of peace was significant, because in Reagan's antecedent previous rhetoric, the Russians rarely, if ever, involved themselves in substantive peace talks. It was a moment when the Soviets broke from the established historical narrative of being myopic and self-serving.

[337] Reagan, "Geneva Address."

Still, the fresh start did not ameliorate the past and current Soviet bad deeds that served to stymie change in the Russian narrative. The "subject matter" of the meeting was influenced by the Soviet Union's past transgressions: "These past 40 years have not been an easy time for the West or for the world. You know the facts; there is no need to recite the historical record. Suffice it to say that the United States cannot afford illusions about the nature of the U.S.S.R." Given his past willingness to attack the Soviet Union on any number of bad acts, Reagan use of *paralipsis* may have seemed surprising. However, the fact that he did not give a litany of Soviet misdeeds confirmed that whatever historical narrative Reagan had been telling, he was open to changing it. At no point did Reagan say the Soviets altered the historical narrative. In fact, he challenged Gorbachev to prove the Soviet Union wanted reform by engaging in "deeds," not only "words." Although Reagan did not explicitly note a change in Soviet action, his positive characterization of Gorbachev, as well as the many principle agreements they reached, implied that the Soviet leader had laid the foundation for changing the historical narrative.

In Reagan's narrative, US and Soviet pasts carried through to the present. In particular, Reagan returned to the historical narrative that depicted the US as a shield against world dangers. This depiction was particularly salient to his discussion of SDI. Gorbachev was concerned that the US "might use a strategic defense system to put offensive weapons into space and establish nuclear superiority." Protesting, Reagan noted that successful research arising from SDI would create a "safer, more stable world that we seek." He, and other Cold War presidents, argued that the United States was "a nation that defends, rather than attacks" and whose "alliances [were] defensive, not offensive." The Americans were peacemakers and freedom fighters. In comparison, the Soviets and other communist regimes were warmongers and despots. Reagan offered the "wars in Afghanistan, Nicaragua, Ethiopia, Angola, and Cambodia" as proof of the

savage nature of communism. Reagan had said the same thing to the United Nations a month earlier, where he "linked progress in East-West relations to the resolution of fighting in Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, Ethiopia and Nicaragua."[338] Communist forces in those areas undergirded totalitarian "regimes which obviously do not represent the will or the approval of the people."[339]

Reagan's rhetoric was designed to create comparisons in the minds of his audience. Reagan's Americans believed in the goodness of American democracy and its attendant boons: Democracies "are less violent toward their citizens and more protective of human rights," avoid war with each other, create and maintain "stable and prosperous" market economies, have "higher life expectancies" among their citizens, and "make good allies."[340] In contrast, totalitarian regimes like the Soviet Union must rule without allowing the freedoms and privileges of democracies because "if an autocracy is successful—if it produces a wealthy and educated population—that population will construct a civil society that will sooner or later demand political change."[341] The leaders of totalitarian governments were discouraged from adopting democratic ideals because they would ultimately lead to loss of power. For decades, Reagan proclaimed the political and moral superiority of the US to the USSR; he believed that the freedom to choose leaders and lifestyles, to live without fear of government, and to enjoy basic human rights were the building blocks not only of a good government but of a good life. It was a ubiquitous Cold War argument that lionized the US and villainized the Soviet Union, who had long denied their citizens the basic constructs of human rights and freedom.

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[338] Bernard Weinraub, "President Urges Soviets to Resolve Wars in 5 Nations," *New York Times*, October 25, 1985.
[339] Reagan, "Geneva Address."
[340] Larry Diamond. "Democracy in Decline," *Foreign Affairs* 95, no. 4 (2016): 153-154. *Business Source Complete*, EBSCO*host*.
[341] Diamond, 154.

In Reagan's narrative, both the US and the Soviet Union had established roles. The US was the protagonist of the historical narrative, and the Soviet Union was the antagonist. One need only follow the trajectory of Reagan's narrative from his pre-presidential days through his presidency to see how neither country deviated from their roles. Before the "Geneva Address," Reagan's Soviet narrative was definitive; however, Reagan cautioned his audience not to "assume" the Soviets would change, and in that word was the possibility of change. To assume is "to suppose,"[342] but it is not "to know."

Reagan's address held evidence of Soviet change in the form of agreements. He praised the good work of both the US and Soviet negotiators for agreements in principle on a number of issues, including the mutual establishment of new consulates in America and the Soviet Union, the formation of a "Pacific air safety agreement" to help avert situations like the Korean Airlines incident[343], and an agreement to research the "feasibility of developing fusion energy." Reagan was ready to move beyond the past, and his rhetorical choices bore that out. The "Geneva Address" was full of phrases and metaphors that invoked forward movement: Reagan and Gorbachev "made a measure of progress" on nuclear arms reductions, and though they had a "long way to go," they were "heading in the right direction." They "moved arms control forward from where [they] were last January," and their negotiators were told to "hasten their vital work." Some form of a word that invoked movement appeared often, especially when Reagan was discussing US-Soviet policy, exchange, or relations.

The summit was the first step in a "long-term effort to build a more stable relationship with the Soviet Union"—one that would not immediately materialize. The Soviets were getting

[342] "assume, v.," OED Online. June 2016. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com.proxy2.library.illinois.edu/view/Entry/12036?redirectedFrom=assume.

[343] The Soviet Union shot down Korean Air Lines Flight 007 September 1, 1983, at first denying their involvement. Later, they admitted to the action, but claimed they did so because the flight was cover for a US spy mission.

in the way of themselves through continued communist expansion "in a number of regions of the world." The President did not have an illusory view of US-Soviet relations. He declared that both "limits" and "promise" populated the summit. One summit out of eleven post-World War II summits could not erase the historical differences between the superpowers. What emerged from the summit that was different from previous summits was a sense of hope and guarded optimism for the future of US-Soviet relations. Optimism might become something more concrete if Reagan and Gorbachev continued to "bridge…differences." Given the Soviets' historical record, Americans might have expected that some differences were too vast to bridge. Still, despite his previous Soviet narrative, Reagan offered his audience new insight into his belief in the future of US-Soviet relations: "Hope," said Reagan, "is a realistic attitude and despair an uninteresting little vice." This sentiment was new to the President's Soviet rhetoric. In the past, there was no hope in the Soviet narrative, but in the "Geneva Address," the possibility of change entered Reagan's story. It was a subtle but important narrative distinction that marked the turning point in what would become a tale of redemption.

Hope as a "realistic attitude" was little more than ether without corresponding actions. Reagan called for reciprocity as a kind of proof that justified hope. A reciprocal relationship would build trust and ameliorate mistrust. Reagan was clear that the superpowers had to "reduce the mistrust and suspicions" in order to forge a different relationship and for successful negotiations to take place. The President conceived of reciprocity as both "words" and "deeds"; Gorbachev, Reagan said, agreed. In part, when Reagan called for more than "words alone," he meant something other than his established criticism of Soviet lip-service to global issues and their history of breaking promises. The President meant that, of course, but he also meant that the superpowers needed deliberation. A prominent aspect of Reagan's sense of US-Soviet

reciprocity was meaningful conversation. He called for open and frank discussions of social and political differences and non-combative political interaction. Reagan declared dialogue the key to keeping the peace and said the superpowers "must be clear with each other and direct."[344]

Reagan sought what Matthew Festenstein calls deliberative trust.[345] This form of deliberation "appears as a potentially valuable resource," for it "may facilitate engagement across differences in complex and diverse societies, where people need to justify to each other their publicly articulated values, interests, identities, and goals."[346] The US and USSR represented two "complex and diverse societies,"[347] and reciprocity allowed for the expression of differences between the superpowers without the fear of thoughtless condemnation. Reagan was adamant that transparency and candor should mark American-Russian interactions, that the "great issues of our time"—nuclear and conventional weapons, chemical warfare, SDI and other defense programs, wars and proxy wars, keeping the world safe from global dangers, and Soviet influence in the world—must be discussed openly and frankly, even if "either side found it uncomfortable or inconvenient." According to Reagan, movement in the right direction for the Soviets had already occurred. Gorbachev and Reagan made "a measure of progress" toward creating a safer world by advancing nuclear arms control through "equitable, verifiable, and deep reductions" of "50 percent in appropriate categories" of nuclear armaments, opening dialogue about controlling and eventually eliminating chemical weapons, and "lessening the chances for surprise attack in Europe." Reagan's call for reciprocity suggested that America and Russia could forge a new relationship different from a past in which deception—created and maintained

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[344] Reagan, "Geneva Address."
[345] Matthew Festenstein, *Negotiating Diversity: Culture, Deliberation, Trust* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 137-159.
[346] Robert Asen, "Deliberation and Trust," *Argumentation & Advocacy* 50, no. 1 (Summer2013): 3. *Communication & Mass Media Complete*, EBSCO*host*.
[347] Ibid., 3.

by the Soviets[348]—ruled the day. In fact, the "Geneva Address" was a moment of praise for the Soviets because their words matched their actions, unlike in the past. Since his ascension to Soviet General Secretary, Gorbachev had claimed he wanted to help make the world safer from nuclear warfare and that he believed arms reductions were vital to ensuring peace; Reagan agreed with Gorbachev on these points.[349] Thus, when both leaders said they wanted to make the world safer and then ostensibly acted on those words via an arms agreement, they achieved reciprocity.

In the "Geneva Address," Reagan offered an argument of reciprocity that the Soviets had gained a measure of trust. Gorbachev and Reagan reached an agreement that was mutually beneficial, and in doing so, the Soviet leader deserved a degree of confidence. Neither side sacrificed more than the other, and as such, there was a reciprocal symmetry[350] that held a "certain inherent appeal"[351] for the audience. Reciprocity helped accomplish summit goals. Those goals included societal exchange aspects of the US-Soviet relationship, as well as political aspects. One way to accomplish societal exchange was more "people-to-people"[352] interactions between US and Soviet citizens. Although Reagan and Gorbachev "remain[ed] far apart on a number of issues," there were some things the two sides agreed upon, such as exchanging works of art, culture, and heritage, and social and educational exchange programs. Reagan believed the exchanges would "help break down stereotypes, build friendships, and, frankly, provide an alternative to propaganda." Ostensibly, the cultural exchanges would, as Reagan said, "provide

[348] Reagan, "Geneva Address."
[349] See Graebner, Burns, and Siracusa, *Reagan, Bush, and Gorbachev*, 68 and 121-122; Service, *The End of the Cold War,* 152; and Reynolds, *Summits: Six Meetings That Shaped the Twentieth Century*, 363-364.
[350] Chaim Perelman, "The New Rhetoric: A Theory of Practical Reasoning," in *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present*, eds. Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg, (New York: Bedford, 2000), 1397.
[351] Warnick and Kline, "The New Rhetoric's Argument Schemes: A Rhetorical View of Practical Reasoning," 1. *Academic OneFile*.
[352] Reagan, "Geneva Address."

an alternative to propaganda." Yet Reagan's comments suggested otherwise, or rather, that the propaganda would solely benefit the US. In a telling statement, Reagan said he wanted "Americans [to] know the people of the Soviet Union—their hopes and fears and the facts of their lives" while Soviet citizens learned about "America's deep desire for peace and our unwavering attachment to freedom." Exchanges would expose Soviet citizens to American democracy and a "better" way of life, while Americans would learn about the Soviet citizenry but not the communist system. Ultimately, exchanges forwarded the expansion of the democratic ideology Reagan had championed for decades. In the "Geneva Address," exchanges became the vehicle for Reagan's argument from reciprocity; America and the Soviet Union would learn to better understand each other, just as Reagan and Gorbachev had at the summit, and in the end, exchanges would enhance and enlarge the reach of American democratic ideals in the Soviet Union.

One of my arguments is that Reagan's tripartite strategies relied on one another to work. Arguments from historical narrative and reciprocity would have fallen short of the mark without synecdoche in the person of Gorbachev. Reagan could not have facilitated change without Gorbachev's work toward Soviet reform in social and political policies. Soviet change and redemption came through the efforts of both men,[353] and from their first meeting in Geneva, Reagan emphasized the importance of their personal interactions. Reagan characterized Gorbachev as far different from his Soviet predecessors; the General Secretary was "energetic," "eloquent," and a "good listener."[354] In past rhetoric, the Soviet Union was a monolithic entity controlled by self-serving politicians who forced Soviet citizens to live under the communist system. Gorbachev, with his distinctly different demeanor and ideas, was unique. In Gorbachev's

[353] Mann, *The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan*, 346.
[354] Reagan, "Geneva Address."

uniqueness, Reagan found a symbol for Soviet change from the past, and a possible new future in US-Soviet relations. Gorbachev came to stand for the whole of the Soviet Union, an entity willing to reform in the dying light of the old ways. The "Geneva Address" laid the groundwork for Reagan's second-term use of Gorbachev as synecdoche for the Soviet Union.

Reagan characterized his interactions with Gorbachev in a way he had never done with previous Soviet leaders. There was a sense of friendliness and ease in Reagan's description of the summit discussions:

> I guess you know that I have just come from Geneva and talks with General Secretary Gorbachev. In the past few days, the past 2 days, we spent over 15 hours in various meetings with the General Secretary and the members of his official party. And approximately 5 of those hours were talks between Mr. Gorbachev and myself, just one on one. That was the best part—our fireside summit.

One-on-one talks beside a fireside are something intimates do, and to his American audience, the expression, "fireside summit," was a clear allusion to Franklin Roosevelt's fireside chats. Roosevelt's "fireside chats" were, and are, iconic for their perceived intimacy and ability to put the American people at ease.[355] Reagan tapped into the nostalgia and *ethos* of Roosevelt's fireside chats, and in doing so, he transformed Gorbachev from the leader of the totalitarian Soviet state into, if not quite a friend, a friendly acquaintance. The image of families and friends gathered together to listen to Roosevelt suddenly included Gorbachev. It was a striking moment in the Soviet narrative for two reasons: One, the perception of a Soviet leader was no longer solely of an evil dictator, and two, Reagan had always preached defense against communist

[355] Elvin T. Lim, "The Lion and the Lamb: De-Mythologizing Franklin Roosevelt's Fireside Chats," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 6, no. 3 (2003): 438. *Communication & Mass Media Complete*, EBSCO*host*.

encroachment, but Reagan seemed to be inviting the very symbol of the Soviet Union into America's midst.

Indeed, Reagan did invite Gorbachev to America, suggesting a meeting in Washington the next year, and Gorbachev reciprocated by inviting Reagan to Moscow the year after that. The invitations were not planned; rather, they arranged them "out in the parking lot." Just as the fireside discussion evoked a picture of friendliness, so too did two people in a parking lot agreeing to visit one another. Reagan established that Gorbachev was different enough from previous Soviet leaders that he had a chance to forge a Soviet relationship unique in the history of the Cold War. Reagan's choice to present Gorbachev as friendly was politically savvy because the Soviet leader had established a measure of global popularity. Gorbachev's popularity presented an obstacle to Reagan's traditional anti-communist rhetoric because he could not use some of his antecedent rhetoric with the same force of *ethos*. The change in Reagan's rhetoric served two purposes: First, it allowed the President to align himself with some of the popular aspects of Gorbachev's rule while continuing to advocate caution in the new relationship. Second, it allowed Reagan to promote the position that it was easier to connect with and change an individual, and in turn, for an individual in Gorbachev's position to help change a system.[356] In short, Gorbachev was a person with whom Reagan could work, respected, and thought well of. Thus, Gorbachev, as a synecdoche for the Soviet Union, encouraged Reagan's audience to see the USSR as something different than was their habit.

When we take into account the number of ways that Reagan signaled changes in the US-Soviet relationship, the "Geneva Address" was unmistakably a pivotal moment in his Soviet narrative. The historical narrative that Reagan carried through from his days as an actor to the Presidency gestured toward a modification of Soviet expectations. Reagan's appeals to

[356] Reagan, "Geneva Address."

reciprocity offered an avenue for Gorbachev to fulfill new explicit and implicit expectations. The President clearly perceived Gorbachev as the synecdoche for a new Soviet Union, and it was the General Secretary's differences from his predecessors that gave Reagan hope Gorbachev would fulfill those expectations. The recurring elements of Reagan's first-term rhetoric—historical narrative; the social, political, and moral character of the US and the USSR; and the actions needed to assure the West's eventual triumph over Soviet communism—were present in the "Geneva Address," but the President altered how he incorporated them. Reagan seized the chance to reframe his Soviet rhetoric, and in doing so, the speech became the moment the President's narrative turned toward one of Soviet redemption.

Immediately after the summit, Reagan and Gorbachev released a joint statement.[357] The statement noted modest progress on a number of issues, and a "vague, generalized assertion that a nuclear war could not be won and should never be fought."[358] Some of the statement's content was familiar to the American public because it "echoed some of Reagan's speeches of the previous two years."[359] The statement, then, was in large part perfunctory, but it also gestured toward a future that included a working US-Soviet relationship, something the Cold War saw little of previously.

Some critics have called the summit a "failure" because it achieved only modest progress on a few issues, and that although Reagan and Gorbachev "liked each other and a bond of trust began to emerge between them" at the meeting, the intervening year between the Geneva and Reykjavik summits was "punctuated by disagreements on issues like Afghanistan, Nicaragua and

[357] Ronald Reagan, "Remarks on Issuing the Joint Soviet-United States Statement on the Summit Meeting in Geneva," (speech, Washington, DC, November 21, 1985), *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=38087.
[358] Mann, 93.
[359] Ibid.

human rights" as the leaders exchanged ideas about disarmament.[360] Others have noted that the "rapport that developed between" at the summit between the two leaders was "significant."[361] Reagan and Gorbachev were in accordance with this latter assessment of the summit; Reagan believed the summit "had gone well," and the "absence of a definite agreement with Reagan failed to dampen [Gorbachev's] optimism" for a new era in US-Soviet relations.[362]

Although the summit drew mixed reviews, critics had generally positive things to say about Reagan's "Geneva Address." Reagan's championing of nuclear de-escalation was warmly received, as "senators and congressmen of both parties applauded his efforts."[363] The President noted in his diary that he had not received such an enthusiastic reception from Congress since he "was shot," and that "the members wouldn't stop clapping & cheering."[364] The press and television congratulated Reagan for changing the tone of US-Soviet relations and moving the superpowers in a new, positive direction.[365] The *Washington Post* called the address Reagan's "the finest of his presidency," effusively praising the President's "tone" as "dignified and statesmanlike," "realistic," and "most important for the future, conciliatory and generous toward the Soviets."[366] The address signaled a "breakthrough in foreign policy by easing [Reagan's] previous rigidity toward the Soviets and seeking to set a more positive climate."[367] Job approval ratings for immediately after Reagan's "Geneva Address" are unavailable; however, just two days before the speech, the President was at 66%, and nearly two months later, he maintained a

[360] Dockrill and Hopkins, 148.
[361] Graebner, Burns, and Siracusa, 90.
[362] Service, 159; See also, Reynolds, *Summits: Six Meetings That Shaped the Twentieth Century*, 383.
[363] Ibid., 158.
[364] Ronald Reagan, *The Reagan Diaries* Ed. Douglas Brinkley (New York: HarperCollins, 2007): 371.
[365] Service, 158.
[366] Haynes Johnson, "Reagan at the Rubicon," *The Washington Post*, November 24, 1985.
[367] Ibid.

good approval rating of 63%.[368] In Western Europe and "around the world," public reaction to the summit and the address was "supportive" and "immensely to the American advantage."[369] Even the Soviets were receptive to Reagan's address, and it was reprinted by *Pravda*, the official newspaper of the Soviet Communist Party.[370]

Reykjavik Address

Despite the encouraging tenor of the Geneva Summit, and Reagan and Gorbachev's mutual words of praise, the US and the Soviet Union soon found themselves at odds with one another. Post-Geneva, Gorbachev fell back on well-worn "Leninist jargon and fierce denunciations," and by early 1986, Reagan was somewhat disillusioned with the Soviet leader's public persona. After years of antagonism, it was not unexpected that the Americans and the Soviets might return to their old roles. Still, Reagan and Gorbachev had made progress in reforming US-Soviet relations, and neither was willing to erase that progress. Gorbachev told his Congress that the superpowers were interdependent on one another—a bold proclamation on his part.[371] By the summer of 1986, Reagan still spoke highly of Gorbachev, remarking to French president François Mitterand that he behaved like a contemporary man, unlike previous Soviet leaders.[372] Nonetheless, the year between the Geneva summit and the October 1986 Reykjavik, Iceland summit was fraught with political turmoil. Although Reagan "hoped to build on what he took as the positive spirit of Geneva," arms disagreements continued to be a contentious issue.[373] Gorbachev insisted that SDI "stood in the way of any meaningful agreement," but he was open to further dialogue. Gorbachev's inflexibility on SDI angered Reagan. Caspar Weinberger, the

[368] Gerhard Peters, "Presidential Job Approval: Ronald Reagan," *The American Presidency Project*, accessed November 3, 2016, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/data/popularity.php?pres=40.
[369] Service, 158.
[370] Ibid.,
[371] Reynolds, 384.
[372] Ibid., 385.
[373] Brands, 520.

President's hawkish Secretary of Defense, took advantage of Reagan's frustration and pushed for him to "break the limits of an unratified Strategic Arms Limitations Talks II (SALT II) treaty" based on reports of Soviet "breaches of SALT limits"; Reagan agreed that the US should not observe the SALT II restraints because of the Soviets' dishonesty in the matter.[374] In the world arena, Gorbachev continued to press his moral advantage on nuclear weapons, calling again for a moratorium on nuclear testing. Despite his fear of escalating a nuclear arms race, Reagan once again took Weinberger's advice, rejecting Gorbachev's proposal and agreeing to nuclear weapons system testing in the name of "American security."[375] Reagan's choices to break the SALT II limitations and approve further nuclear testing hurt his image and made him seem like "a warmonger when Gorbachev was preaching peace and fewer weapons." In fact, Gorbachev proposed a plan to eliminate all "nuclear weapons by the end of the century."[376] Critics of the proposal saw it "as an effort to test Reagan's sincerity."[377] Reagan admired the plan, but he was unwilling to "overrule" the "hawks in his administration and Congress" who pressed him reject it. Still, Reagan wanted to reduce the danger of nuclear arms, and Gorbachev was "willing to meet again" at another summit.[378]

Gorbachev's goodwill had its limits, however, and it seemed to evaporate in the wake of the April 1986 Chernobyl disaster. A nuclear reactor at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant in the Soviet Ukraine city of Pripyat suffered a catastrophic malfunction, "leading to an explosion that spewed large amounts of radioactive debris into the atmosphere."[379] There were thirty-one

[374] Ibid., 520-521.
[375] Ibid.,
[376] Ibid.,
[377] Gaddis, 230.
[378] Brands, 521.
[379] Ibid., 522.

immediate deaths, and thirty-one more "through March 1987."[380] The Soviet response to the tragedy "was a debacle."[381] Gorbachev wanted to tell the Soviet people as much as he could, but the "ingrained secrecy of the Soviet bureaucracy prevented even him from finding out what was going on." As such, the Soviet people found out details of the disaster from Western sources, and even though Reagan "refrained from trying to gain political ground at Gorbachev's expense," some Americans did. Gorbachev was furious at what he saw as the West exploiting the tragedy for political gain. In light of the perceived exploitation, and the Reagan administration's recent stance on SDI, SALT II, and the nuclear moratorium, Gorbachev concluded there was ample "evidence of American bad faith" in the ongoing arms talks.

By July, progress between the US and the Soviet Union had not only stalled but seemed to be moving backward; the Geneva spirit that so enthralled Reagan and Gorbachev immediately after the summit had dissipated into the ether. A new summit, and the furthering of US-Soviet relations seemed unlikely, but "two visitors that summer—Francois Mitterrand and Richard Nixon—helped rekindle Gorbachev's ardor for summitry."[382] Mitterrand and Nixon praised Reagan at the same time they acknowledged his faults, and that "struck Gorbachev forcibly."[383] Gorbachev took the summer to mull over Mitterrand and Nixon's words, and in September, he proposed a summit in Reykjavik, Iceland during which the two sides would discuss SDI, "intermediate nuclear forces in Europe, and nuclear testing."[384] Reagan agreed to the summit.

Tensions were still high between the US and the Soviet Union as the summit drew near, and an international incident threatened to escalate those tensions. Ahead of the Iceland meeting,

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[380] Timothy W. Luke, "Chernobyl: The Packaging of Transnational Ecological Disaster," *Critical Studies In Mass Communication* 4, no. 4 (1987): 351. *Communication & Mass Media Complete*, EBSCO*host*.
[381] Brands, 522.
[382] Reynolds, 385.
[383] Ibid., 385-386.
[384] Ibid., 386.

the FBI arrested Soviet physicist Gennadi Zakharov for attempting to buy classified US Air Force documents. In retaliation, the KGB arrested American journalist Nicholas Daniloff for espionage. US-Soviet relations were strained as the Iceland meeting date approached, but the superpowers agreed to exchange Zakharov for Daniloff, and the Russians also released Soviet dissident Yuri Orlov. Although the exchange did not create a convivial tone for the approaching summit, it nevertheless helped rebuild some lost trust between the Soviets and Americans.[385]

Frustrated by an inability to progress his agenda at the US-Soviet summit in Reykjavik, Iceland, Reagan's "Address to the Nation on the Meetings With Soviet General Secretary Gorbachev in Iceland" ("Reykjavik Address") focused more on the failures and unacceptable political and social positions of the Soviet Union than did the "Geneva Address." If the "Geneva Address" demonstrated the Soviet's first steps toward redemption, the "Reykjavik Address" showed Soviet backsliding. The speech was replete with charges of Soviet weapons treaties and human rights violations. Reagan characterized the Soviets as obstinate in the area of weapons reduction agreements. The tenor and subject matter of the "Reykjavik Address" reflected the tensions and conflicts of the previous year. Nonetheless, its part in the Soviet redemption narrative cannot be overstated. Where the "Geneva Address" was a turning point in Reagan's overall narrative, the "Reykjavik Address" challenged the Russians to create a new Soviet narrative. Specifically, Reagan's characterization of Soviet wrongdoings and obstinacy in conjunction with claims that "the Soviets must make"[386] the decision to advance US-Soviet relations offered the Russians the chance to begin redeeming themselves. What we find in the "Reykjavik Address" are the rhetorical strategies of historical narrative, reciprocity, and

[385] Reynolds, *Summits: Six Meetings That Shaped the Twentieth Century*, 387.
[386] Ronald Reagan, "Address to the Nation on the Meetings With Soviet General Secretary Gorbachev in Iceland," (speech, Washington, DC, October 13, 1986), *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=36587.

synecdoche used in the service of forcing Gorbachev to choose how the Soviet narrative would proceed.

Reagan started the speech by admitting that the summit was, in part, a failure. The Americans had "proposed the most sweeping and generous arms control proposal in history…[and] the complete elimination of all ballistic missiles—Soviet and American—from the face of the Earth by 1996," but when the summit ended, the "American offer [was] still on the table." The reasons that Reagan opened the address with the failure to reach an agreement were twofold. First, he placed the US in the familiar historical narrative role of benevolent world leader. In this case, America sought a safer world. Second, he implied that the Soviets were the reason negotiations failed. Reagan put the Soviet Union in their traditional role as an impediment to global peace.

In the "Reykjavik Address," Reagan used historical narrative differently than he did in the "Geneva Address." In the "Geneva Address," Reagan highlighted the Soviet Union's nasty history as a means to emphasize a fresh start. In the "Reykjavik Address," historical narrative served two main purposes: To chastise the Soviets for their continued misdeeds, and germane to this study, it demonstrated the scope of change needed to alter the Soviet narrative. Three subjects demonstrated the scope of continued Soviet transgressions: The first was the Soviet violation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty (ABM). According to the treaty, each country "agreed to limit any defense against nuclear missile attacks to the emplacement in one location in each country of a small number of missiles capable of intercepting and shooting down incoming nuclear missiles." The USSR "deployed the few antiballistic missiles around Moscow as the treaty permitted," but they later expanded that defense system into the city of Krasnoyarsk. Reagan linked the violation to Gorbachev's unwillingness to allow SDI to proceed unfettered. In

Reagan's rhetoric, the Soviets enacted their typical underhanded ways by creating an obstacle for SDI. They opposed SDI because they wanted to maintain the upper hand in nuclear defense in the form of the missile defense system of Moscow and Krasnoyarsk. It was, as Reagan said, "their own SDI." Such duplicitous actions fell in line with the characteristic self-serving communists of Reagan's Soviet narrative.

The second subject of Soviet transgression was human rights violations. Reagan established a pattern of the USSR violating treaties in his discussion of human rights. Just as the Soviets flouted the rules of the ABM treaty, so too did they disregard the 1975 Helsinki Accords. The agreement, signed by the Soviets, was "a far-ranging set of agreements among 35 countries in Europe, North America, and the Soviet bloc" that included a "set of principles guaranteeing individual rights of expression, assembly, and so on."[387] Specifically, Reagan cited the Soviets "refusal to let people emigrate from Russia" to escape religious persecution, and to "rejoin their families, husbands, and wives…separated by national borders."[388]

Like previous Cold War presidents, Reagan chastised the Soviets for what he saw as inexcusable human rights abuses—rights he called "fundamental" to human lives. Not surprisingly, the first fundamental right Reagan noted was the right to live free from religious persecution. In doing so, the President created a sense of empathy between his American audience and the persecuted Soviet citizen, for history taught Reagan's audience that America, as they knew it, was founded by men and women fleeing religious persecution in Europe. The President insisted that human rights had a direct effect on negotiations: "Improvement of the human condition within the Soviet Union is indispensable for an improvement in bilateral relations with the United States." If the Soviets wanted to continue deliberation, they had to act

[387] John Feffer, "The Forgotten Lessons of Helsinki," *World Policy Journal* 21, no. 3 (2004): 32. *Business Source Complete*, EBSCO*host*.
[388] Reagan, "Reykjavik Address."

on their words: "So, I told Mr. Gorbachev—again in Reykjavik, as I had in Geneva—we Americans place far less weight upon the words that are spoken at meetings such as these than upon the deeds that follow. When it comes to human rights and judging Soviet intentions, we're all from Missouri—you got to show us."[389] Reagan had never trusted the Soviets, because if the Soviets would betray their own people, they would do the same to the rest of the world.[390]

The third subject of Soviet transgression was their continued interference in the political affairs of other countries. "Regional conflict" was another subject that Reagan used to argue from the historical narrative. Just as he had in the "Geneva Address," Reagan enumerated the countries in which the Soviets directly or indirectly promoted communism, encouraged "totalitarian rule," or engaged in war. The Soviets had a history of interference in other countries' affairs, and those "Soviet actions" were detrimental to citizens of places like "Afghanistan, Angola, Nicaragua, and Cambodia." The Soviet Union proved willing to invade, coerce, and threaten other countries for political gain, and they continued to do so. Reagan admitted that the US also involved themselves in the affairs of other countries, although solely for the "expansion of freedom," and to aid "freedom fighters who [were] resisting the imposition of totalitarian rule." As was his wont, Reagan's comparison reified the established record: the US was on the side of good, and the Soviet Union was on the side of evil. Reagan's use of the well-known historical narratives of the US and the Soviet Union served to remind his audience that despite the positive outcome of the summit a year ago, the Soviets had yet to prove they were truly willing to change. The President said as much when he declared that he could not "promise that the talks in Iceland or any future discussions with Mr. Gorbachev will lead inevitably to

[389] Ibid.
[390] Ibid.

great breakthroughs or momentous treaty signings." The eventual outcome of the Soviet narrative remained uncertain.

Uncertainty and frustration were present in Reagan's use of reciprocity arguments. That ambiguity was perhaps most prevalent in Reagan's characterization of the Soviets and their response to SDI. Reagan was heavily invested in the realization of SDI, and he argued that SDI would benefit the world as a whole. Reagan described the negotiations in terms of reciprocity: If the Soviets agreed to the start of the SDI program, the US would "share the benefits" of SDI's non-nuclear defensive capabilities. The Soviets rejected the immediate start of the SDI program; instead, they "asked for a 10-year delay in the deployment of SDI" in what Reagan saw as "effectively killing SDI." The Soviet rejection was emblematic of the sense of uncertainty and frustration in Reagan's arguments from reciprocity. Protection from nuclear attack should have been a strong bargaining chip. Instead, Reagan found himself wondering why Gorbachev would discard a chance to leave behind the defensive strategy known as mutually assured destruction (MAD). The essence of MAD was that "if one side launched a nuclear attack, the other side could retaliate." Reagan found MAD deeply flawed because the "threat of nationwide annihilation made such a limited defense seem useless." A series of questions seemed to answer the question of why the Soviets rejected SDI: "How does a defense of the United States threaten the Soviet Union or anyone else? Why are the Soviets so adamant that America remain forever vulnerable to Soviet rocket attack? As of today, all free nations are utterly defenseless against Soviet missiles fired either by accident or design. Why does the Soviet Union insist that we remain so—forever?" These questions pointed to a zero-sum game mentality on the Soviets' part. Reagan's questions appeared to illuminate a US-Soviet relationship in which the Russians saw a victory by the Americans as a loss for themselves.

For all of the frustration Reagan experienced when he failed to secure a deal on SDI, the Iceland summit ultimately bolstered the credibility of his later redemption narrative. His insistence on deeds over words played to his dedication to reciprocity. When the Soviets would not agree to a mutually beneficial SDI agreement, Reagan walked away from the negotiations rather than settle for a bad deal. Thus, when the Soviets later changed their stance on a number of issues, including arms controls, it boosted Reagan's *ethos*. His words and deeds at Reykjavik eventually proved his prescience in the area of the intersection of policy and reciprocity. As one critic argues, the "Reykjavik Address" was politically significant in part because "Reagan used SDI as a diplomatic tool to pressure Gorbachev publicly to implement reforms within the Soviet Union, especially human rights reforms."[391] Reagan "argued that there was a historical continuity between past and present Soviet practices of violating human rights."[392] The "Reykjavik address" was part of Reagan's strategy of linking past and present Soviet human rights violations in order to force Gorbachev to decry, or "move away" from, such bad actions. In turn, the Soviets would be less likely to "revert to form" in the future and more likely to continue social and political reforms.[393] Essentially, the Soviets were pressured to act on the promises of Brezhnev from a decade and a half earlier.

It was clear Gorbachev was not disposed to help Reagan advance his agenda, and, in turn, Reagan saw little use in Gorbachev's place as a synecdoche. If Gorbachev would not change, neither would the Soviet Union. As such, Reagan's discussion of Soviet good deeds, change, or Gorbachev's positive qualities, was lacking. The Iceland meeting was far less productive or positive than the Geneva summit, and Reagan avoided ascribing much in the way of praise to the

[391] B. Wayne Howell, "Reagan and Reykjavik: Arms Control, SDI, and the Argument from Human Rights," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* Vol. 11, no. 3 (2008): 391
[392] Ibid., 392.
[393] Ibid., 401.

Soviets. One exception was near the end of the speech; Reagan declared that "there's good reason for hope. I saw evidence of this is in the progress we made in the talks with Mr. Gorbachev."[394] The statement was vague and perfunctory; Reagan was disappointed and angry with the Soviets for hammering SDI at the expense of moving other negotiations forward.

The "Reykjavik Address" did not advance the Soviet narrative in a positive direction. In fact, it seemed as if the Soviets had backslid to a time before Geneva. However, Reagan was "still optimistic" that the "opportunity to begin eliminating the nuclear threat" was closer than ever. Despite the lack of successful negotiation, the "Reykjavik Address" was an important speech in the course of Reagan's Soviet narrative specifically because it emphasized the failings of the Soviet Union in terms of changing the historic narrative, embracing reciprocity, and maintaining friendly relations with the US. A successful meeting might have pushed Reagan to maintain the status quo, but because Gorbachev and the Soviets proved frustrating, obstinate, and unwilling to compromise, whether there would be future meetings and negotiations was "a decision the Soviets" would make; the Americans would be "prepared to go forward whenever and wherever the Soviets are ready." The major takeaway from this speech was that it offered the Soviets a chance to create a new Soviet narrative forwarded by themselves. Most good redemption stories do not involve the protagonist coercing the antagonist to change. Instead, worthy redemption stories involve an individual or group who take responsibility for their past actions and make a conscious effort to become better than they were.[395]

The failure at Iceland, in large part because Reagan would not compromise on SDI, drew sharp criticism from "liberals in the West for sacrificing world peace on the altar of Star Wars."

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[394] Reagan, "Reykjavik Address."

[395] Bryan J. McCann, "Redemption in the Neoliberal and Radical Imaginations: The Saga of Stanley 'Tookie' Williams," *Communication, Culture & Critique* 7, no. 1 (2014): 95. *Communication & Mass Media Complete*, EBSCO*host*.

Western conservatives were also critical of Reagan because he had come close to compromising on SDI. Still, the meeting set up a historic outline for eliminating nuclear weapons by 1996.[396] Reagan's insistence on keeping SDI just as he would like took the total elimination of nuclear weapons off of the table though, and after Reykjavik, "Reagan's aides undertook a propaganda blitz to emphasize that the Soviet's concern over SDI proved that the system was essential," while Gorbachev "dismissed the White House statements as propaganda, stressing" that it was Reagan's idea to eliminate all nuclear weapons, yet he backed down from the proposal.[397]

Reactions to the address universally commented on the failure of the Reykjavik summit—specifically that the negotiations broke down because of a "dispute" over SDI and Reagan's unwillingness to compromise his stance on the program[398]—and many noted that the address seemed to be geared toward salvaging some semblance of positivity from the meeting. Indeed, Reagan "refrained from blaming Gorbachev personally for the dramatic breakdown"; instead he "emphasized his optimism that the U.S. and the Soviets [could] overcome their deep differences over SDI."[399] The *New York Times* remarked on the "conciliatory" tone of the address and Reagan's insistence that despite the botched nature of the summit, the superpowers were closer than ever to meaningful an arms accord.[400] As Lou Cannon observed, Reagan sought to reframe the summit, not as a failure, but as a rocky "step on the road to eventual success."[401] Americans "made a similar evaluation," as evidenced by a "CBS poll taken the week after

[396] Reynolds, *Summits: Six Meetings That Shaped the Twentieth Century*, 392.
[397] Graebner, Burns, and Siracusa, *Reagan, Bush, Gorbachev: Revisiting the End of the Cold War*, 94.
[398] George de Lama, "Reagan: Arms Deal in Reach," *Chicago Tribune*, October 14, 1986.
[399] Ibid.
[400] Gerald M. Boyd, "Summit Aftermath: The View from the Oval Office; Reagan Says Soviet Barred Accord on Arms Reduction, but Offers to Renew Talks: Defends His Stand," *New York Times*, October 14, 1986.
[401] Lou Cannon, "Reagan to Seek A Silver Lining," *The Washington Post*, October 14, 1986.

Reykjavik" that "showed an 11-point jump (to 72 percent)" in Americans who thought Reagan was handling US-Soviet relations well.[402]

London Address

A little over a year-and-a-half passed between the Reykjavik summit address and Reagan's "Remarks to Members of the Royal Institute of Foreign Affairs" ("London Address") on June 3, 1988. During that time, the relationship between the US and the Soviet Union generally moved in a positive direction, although there were some problems. In November 1986, the Iran-Contra scandal rocked the Reagan administration, and in an effort to prove he was still strong in foreign policy and not "soft on communism,"[403] Reagan "sanctioned the deployment of an extra B-52 bomber equipped with cruise missiles." That appeared to violate the SALT II treaty, and members of Gorbachev's party demanded an increase in the Soviet nuclear arsenal as a retaliatory move. Gorbachev disagreed, believing that Reagan "needed to distract attention from the Iran-Contra scandal and restore his authority."[404] The practical decision demonstrated the difference between old-line Soviet leaders and Gorbachev.

Gorbachev continued to show a willingness to break from traditional Soviet policy with the introduction of the *perestroika* and *glasnost* policies. *Perestroika*, or "restructuring," was "designed to restructure both the Soviet economy and Soviet foreign policy"; it "would retain, but revitalize, the fundamental principles of socialism by balancing carefully new free market incentives and expanding democracy with central planning and protection of common societal needs."[405] In part, *perestroika* would be achieved through *glasnost*, or "transparency," which would "encourage openness in every sphere of public life and the search for what was good and

[402] Cannon *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime*, 770.
[403] Service, *The End of the Cold War*, 235.
[404] Ibid., 236.
[405] Graebner, Burns, and Siracusa, *Reagan, Bush, Gorbachev: Revisiting the End of the Cold War*, 66.

true for the improvement of society."[406] Reagan recognized that Gorbachev's reforms would benefit the US-Soviet relationship. However, instead of completely easing away from his anti-Soviet rhetoric, Reagan pressed the advantage, perhaps most famously from in front of the Berlin Wall when he challenged Gorbachev to "Tear down this wall!"[407] Still, for all of the political flare-ups, Reagan and Gorbachev signed the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty at the Washington summit in December 1987. From May 29-June 3, 1988 Reagan and Gorbachev summited in Moscow. Expectations of the meeting were low; Reagan's position as a "lame duck" president guaranteed that nothing new of historic import would occur.[408] However, Reagan managed to create some waves when said he no longer thought of the Soviet Union as an "evil empire." That, said Reagan, was "'another time, another era.'"[409] Reagan's comment was significant because it "carried weight" with a number of groups: For the Americans, it "signified a winding down of the Cold War"; for Gorbachev, it allowed him to claim that he had "succeeded in changing Reagan's rhetoric; and for the Soviet people, it "served to reinforce the notion that political life in the Soviet Union was indeed opening up."[410]

Two years before the Moscow Summit, the Iceland summit had been a setback to both US-Soviet relations and the Soviet Union's redemption narrative. The US and the Soviet Union seemed to have retreated into an antagonistic relationship. Two years later, Reagan's "Remarks to Members of the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London" ("London Address"), painted a far different picture of the US-Soviet relationship. The "London Address" is the most

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[406] Ibid.
[407] Ronald Reagan, "Remarks on East-West Relations at the Brandenburg Gate in West Berlin,"(speech, Washington, DC, June 12, 1987), *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=34390.
[408] "Summit Hopes are Wisely Limited," *Chicago Tribune*, May 27, 1988.
[409] Stanley Meisler, "Reagan Recants "Evil Empire" Description." *Los Angeles Times*, June 1, 1988, accessed June 5, 2016, http://articles.latimes.com/1988-06-01/news/mn3667_1_evil-empire.
[410] Mann, 305.

positive and enthusiastic speech in this study. By the time Reagan gave the address, the relationship between the US and the Soviet Union was steadily improving, and the President's Soviet narrative was rapidly changing. Reagan was optimistic about the future of the Soviet Union as a player on the world stage and about relations between the US and the USSR. Reagan's positivity was on display in his use of historical narrative as a measure of the success of American policies and Soviet social and political change; in his praise of reciprocity in the form of deliberation and the mutual interconnected political activities of the West; and in his observations of Gorbachev as a synecdoche for a changing Soviet Union.

In both the "Geneva Address" and the "Reykjavik Address," arguments from historical narrative functioned as a method of comparing the Soviets' past actions to their current actions. Reagan used those actions as evidence of ongoing misdeeds by the Soviets. In turn, Reagan adjusted his rhetoric to aid in his arguments that the Soviets should change their ways. Just as the Soviets were generally characterized as menaces over the past forty years, the Americans were characterized as guarantors of protection. Thus the present affected the past. The same is true of the "London Address," although congratulatory rhetoric, not condemnation, filled the speech. Specifically, Reagan argued that over the last five years, the West

> embarked…on a new postwar strategy, a forward strategy of freedom, a strategy of public candor about the moral and fundamental differences between statism and democracy, but also a strategy of vigorous diplomatic engagement; a policy that rejects both the inevitability of war or the permanence of totalitarian rule, a policy based on

> realism that seeks not just treaties for treaties' sake but the recognition and resolution of fundamental differences with our adversaries.[411]

Reagan was crowing, because when he came into the presidency, he had been a vocal opponent of détente; he believed it had weakened the United States politically and militarily. The outcome of his new strategy—and have no doubt that he considered the current method of engaging the Soviets his foreign policy strategy—was "already bearing fruit." Moreover, he thought the world was probably "entering a new era in history, a time of lasting change in the Soviet Union." Reagan had just finished a summit in Moscow, and he was proud and eager to talk about "the progress toward democratic reform" taking place in the Soviet Union. The Soviets were changing their role in the narrative; they showed characteristics of Reagan's protagonist: the United States. It was important that Reagan specified that the new policy simply helped nurture the change in the Soviet narrative, not that the West had redeemed the Soviets. It was imperative that the Soviets chose their own path to redemption.

In the "London Address," redemption also took on a supernatural aspect. At its core, the "London Address" was about God, reciprocity, and redemption. Reagan described the West as on a "crusade for freedom," and that its move "toward those things we honor and love: human dignity, the hope of freedom for all peoples and for all nations," was a "pilgrimage." Most important, Reagan intimated that his foreign policy was blessed by God: "I've always cherished the belief that all of history is such a pilgrimage and that our Maker, while never denying us free will, does over time guide us with a wise and provident hand, giving direction to history and slowly bringing good from evil—leading us ever so slowly but ever so relentlessly and lovingly to a moment when the will of man and God are as one again." Reagan's words were the pinnacle

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[411] Ronald Reagan, "Remarks to Members of the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London," (speech, Washington, DC, June 3, 1988), *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=35906.

of the power of reciprocity. In the context of the Soviet redemption narrative, Reagan suggested that because of his faith, God guided his political decisions. As evidenced by the "momentous events" transpiring in the Soviet Union, those decisions "slowly [brought] good from evil." The implication was that the Soviets had changed through the guidance of God via Reagan. In that way, the "London Address" bookended the "Evil Empire Address." In the "Evil Empire Address," policy and faith were inextricably linked; the "London Address" became a kind of proof of the veracity of that connection.

There was a prophetic dimension to Reagan's connection of policy and faith that carried from the "Evil Empire Address" through the "London Address." The prophetic aspect was unsurprising, because as Paul Kengor asserts, Reagan took on a kind of priestly role in a speech that was the capstone to a successful, decades-long, "crusade" against communism.[412] The crusade was coming to an end, and positivity ruled the day. The Soviet redemption narrative became a story of transcendence. Note that the God did not force the Soviets to change; they exercised "free will," thus preserving the spirit of a redemption tale.

Although Reagan may have believed the Hand of Providence had guided the Soviet change, he understood the important and tangible contributions of Gorbachev to the process. After the Reykjavik summit, Reagan's praise of Gorbachev grew in frequency and strength. By the time the President gave his "London Address," it was clear that he held a personal and political affection for Gorbachev. The Soviet leader changed the perception of the Soviet Union as militarily aggressive, societally oppressive, and politically myopic by relaxing some controls and slowly implementing new reforms. Reagan was stunned by how much change Gorbachev ushered into the USSR in a short time:

[412] Paul Kengor, *The Crusader: Ronald Reagan and the Fall of Communism* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2006): 278.

> In all aspects of Soviet life, the talk is of progress toward democratic reform—in the economy, in political institutions, in religious, social, and artistic life. It is called glasnost—openness; it is perestroika—restructuring. Mr. Gorbachev and I discussed his upcoming party conference, where many of these reforms will be debated and perhaps adopted—such things as official accountability, limitations on length of service in office, an independent judiciary, revisions of the criminal law, and lowering taxes on cooperatives. In short, giving individuals more freedom to run their own affairs, to control their own destinies.[413]

The possible changes were historic in their scope. The idea of them happening was radically foreign in the history of the Cold War Soviet Union. So much so, that Reagan recognized them as "cause for shaking the head in wonder." Reagan's observations of the change served to highlight the great differences between past and present US-Soviet relationships.

As he had in previous speeches, Reagan linked the person of Gorbachev to the politics of the Soviet Union. Gorbachev, as a synecdoche for the Soviet Union, embodied what Reagan saw in Soviet politics. Reagan's rhetoric reflected that belief. In one instance, he told a story about him and Gorbachev walking around "Red Square, talking about a growing personal friendship, and meeting together average citizens, realizing how much our people have in common." Reagan called it a "special moment in a week of special moments." Unlike Soviet leaders of the past, Reagan believed Gorbachev was a "serious man seeking serious reform." For all of the change Reagan observed, he recalled that what he would remember the most were Soviet citizens' "faces of hope—the hope of a new era in human history and, hopefully, an era of peace and freedom for all."[414] Reagan and Gorbachev's relationship was mirrored in US-Soviet relations. So went

[413] Reagan, "London Address."
[414] Ibid.

Gorbachev, so went the Soviet Union. As a synecdoche, Gorbachev stood in as the general demeanor of the Soviet Union. When Reagan said that he and Gorbachev had a "growing personal friendship," he signaled that the US could have the same kind of relationship with the Soviet Union. The once antagonistic villains of the world were redeeming themselves through Gorbachev. The President's words could not be more different from his early vitriolic Soviet rhetoric; Reagan saw Soviet change as the story of a state in the process of transition and redemption. His rhetoric of the past, of an insidious, barbaric, militarized threat to the world was replaced by the vivid language of friendship and of people no longer downtrodden but filled with optimism.

The "London Address" contained Reagan's well-worn rhetorical strategies of historical narrative, reciprocity, and synecdoche, but he used them in to emphasize the positive aspects of the Soviet narrative instead of the negative aspects as he had previously. That turnabout makes the address important in Reagan's catalogue of speeches. Unfortunately, the speech seems lost to academic circles; there are no journal articles dedicated to it. I think that is unfortunate because it is a fine example of Reagan's changed Soviet rhetoric. His contemporary audience seemed to understand its value as well. In a diary entry from the day of the speech, Reagan briefly mentions the speech, calling it "very well received."[415] Just before Reagan delivered the "London Address," his job approval poll numbers sat at 45%, and by the beginning of the next month, had climbed to 50%.[416] [417] The *Chicago Tribune* elaborated on the audience reception, noting the positive tone of the address, Reagan's praise of Gorbachev, and that the President "drew a

[415] Ronald Reagan, *The Reagan Diaries*, ed. Douglas Brinkley (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 615.
[416] Gerhard Peters, "Presidential Job Approval: Ronald Reagan," *The American Presidency Project*, accessed November 3, 2016, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/data/popularity.php?pres=40.
[417] Reagan's approval numbers had never recovered from the initial blow of the Iran-Contra scandal.

standing ovation from an audience of about 400."[418] One reporter noted that the speech was "sentimental" in its commendation of Britain, and that it reinforced the "political love affair between Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher."[419] Some found the speech "flamboyant" and overly saccharine, but admitted that Reagan's positive assessment of the Soviet Union "may prove portentous for the next decade" of US-Soviet relations.[420] Reagan's effusive admiration of Thatcher and the Brits played alongside his overwhelmingly positive declarations of Gorbachev and the new Soviet attitude to create a kind of informal welcome for the Russians to the Western sphere of friendship. Reagan was still somewhat cautious, but as historian H.W. Brands notes, "His tone and demeanor indicated he had hopes."[421]

Conclusion

By the end of Reagan's time in the Oval Office, the Soviets enjoyed a place as acquaintances of the United States. To say the two countries were "friends" is an overstatement, but they were friendly. At the start of Reagan's second term the Soviet Union was firmly in the enemy camp; their social, domestic, foreign, and military policies were antithetical to US interests and ideologies. By January, 1989, they had come a long way from being a dark, insidious, looming, "evil empire." The historically irredeemable Soviet Union had, in great part, redeemed themselves. The story of that redemption was told through Reagan's second-term rhetoric, followed easily enough by paying attention to his discussions of the historical misdeeds of the Soviet Union and how that situated the Russians on the world stage; his call for a reciprocal relationship that would build trust between the superpowers; and the personally and

[418] Ray Moseley and George de Lama, "Reagan: New Era Dawning for Soviets," *Chicago Tribune*, June 4, 1988.
[419] Ray Moseley, "Political Love Affair Still Glows," *Chicago Tribune*, June 4, 1988.
[420] Michael White, "Reagan Hitches His Wagon to Soviet Perestroika," *The Guardian*, Jun 4, 1988.
[421] Brands, 696.

politically redeeming qualities of Gorbachev, his reforms, and his role as a synecdoche for the Soviet Union.

Reagan's "Farewell Address" was the culmination of a presidency in which the redemption narrative became central to his legacy. The address recalled themes, aspects, and strategies of the previous three speeches in this chapter, and it served to remind Reagan's audience of the success of the Soviet redemption tale. What follows is a brief study of the "Farewell Address" and its place in the context of the redemption narrative during Reagan's second term. The purpose of organizing the conclusion around the "Farewell Address" is to demonstrate how Reagan's final presidential speech created a cohesive finish to the Soviet redemption narrative.

The end of Reagan's Soviet redemption narrative unfolded slowly. The Soviet Union had decades of oppression, war, and lies to overcome, so to expect a quick turnaround in the Soviet narrative was unrealistic. The "Geneva Address" in 1985 was the turning point in Reagan's narrative. There, Reagan first noted the possibility that the Soviets were changing. He used historical narrative to demonstrate the differences in Soviet word and deed. That is, he compared past and present actions to show how the Soviets may have altered their narrative. He was cautiously optimistic about the change, but history weighed heavily on his optimism. It is easy enough to say that that the "Geneva Address" was the start of the resolution of the Soviet redemption narrative, but it is important to remember that the idea of the Soviets taking steps to become better than they were was nearly unthinkable. That Reagan would be the author of such a narrative was shocking, for he had decades of vitriolic, anti-communist rhetoric under his belt. It was not easy to put the Soviets on the path to redemption. The Soviet Union was not the Severus

Snape of the world; it was rather more like Lord Voldemort. Its transgressions were great, and that meant it would have to fight hard for redemption.

When Reagan delivered his "Farewell Address to the Nation" ("Farewell Address") in January, 1989, the US and Soviet Union's relationship was friendlier than it had been at any point in the 20th century. Between Reagan's "London Address" and the "Farewell Address," conflict between the superpowers was minimal.[422] In fact, long before the end of 1988, Gorbachev showed his willingness to pursue peace and reforms; two events in particular stood out. First, Soviet scientist and human rights activist Andrei Sakharov toured the United States in November. Sakharov "developed the Soviet hydrogen bomb," won the Nobel Peace prize, and "endured six years of internal exile for his views on human rights" in the Soviet Union.[423] His trip was a major indicator of Gorbachev's commitment to *perestroika*. Second, in a stunning December announcement, Gorbachev said that he would "cut 500,000 men from the Soviet military, about 10%, and retire the associated equipment," "remove 10,000 tanks, 8,500 artillery pieces and 800 combat aircraft from Soviet inventories," eliminate "six Soviet tank divisions…stationed in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary," and "restructure his forces in Eastern Europe to be 'clearly defensive.'"[424]

Gorbachev's actions were proof that the Soviet Union had abandoned the bad acts that once defined the historical narrative, and in the "Farewell Address," Reagan demonstrated Soviet redemption through historical narrative by reminding his audience from where and how far the Soviet Union had progressed. What the narrative used to be was important to understanding what

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[422] John H. Cushman, Jr., "2 Soviet Warships Reportedly Bump U.S. Navy Vessels," *The New York Times*, February 13, 1988.
[423] Karen Elaine Laing, "Sakharov in US Puts in Plug for Perestroika," *The Christian Science Monitor*, November 8, 1988.
[424] Les Aspin, "Gorbachev Finally Serves Up the Beef in Perestroika; Now West Must Chew on it," *Los Angeles Times*, December 08, 1988.
http://search.proquest.com.proxy2.library.illinois.edu/docview/909200650?accountid=14553.

the narrative was presently. The United States had "forged a satisfying new closeness with the Soviet Union"[425] based on a demonstrable change in Soviet actions.[426] In the past, the Soviets merely paid lip-service to the tenets of détente and "promise[s] to treat their own people and the people of the world better. But the gulag was still the gulag, and the state was still expansionist, and they still waged proxy wars in Africa, Asia, and Latin America." Once, the Soviets were untrustworthy promise-breakers with an expansionist agenda. The historical narrative was filled with Soviet lies and misdeeds, and nothing before Reagan's second term indicated they might possess redemptive qualities.

Over the course of four years, the narrative changed; it was "different." In part, a farewell address should praise aspects of American life, and in Reagan's narrative, American policies built on democratic "principles" were the impetus for Soviet change. Reagan had not faltered from pushing democratic ideals in his policy negotiations with Gorbachev, and the Soviet leader had worked within that framework while implementing his own "internal democratic reforms." Subsequently, the US and the Soviet Union eventually came to agreements on a number of issues and formed a "new closeness." The President's "Farewell Address" demonstrated how far the Soviets had come in changing the historical narrative since Reagan first sounded a cautiously optimistic note in the "Geneva Address" for such an improvement.

The "Geneva Address" opened up the public to seeing the Soviets as something greater than villains. Reagan emphasized some positive aspects of the Gorbachev-led USSR, but a series of heated disagreements between the US and the USSR had taken some of the shine off the apple. Those disagreements carried through into the 1986 Reykjavik summit, and subsequently, into the "Reykjavik Address." That address was far more negative than the "Geneva Address," in

[425] Ronald Reagan, "Farewell Address to the Nation," (speech, Washington, DC, January 11, 1989), *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29650.
[426] Ibid.

large part because Gorbachev resisted agreeing to SDI, and Reagan felt frustrated with the negotiations. The "Reykjavik Address" functioned as a challenge to the Soviets to do some self-reflection and consider the good a reciprocal US-USSR relationship could do in terms of global safety. Reagan's rhetoric characterized the Soviets as something more like their pre-Geneva summit days; it seemed that the Soviet Union was backsliding on the road to redemption.

In terms of the success of arguing for a relationship of reciprocity, Reagan's "Farewell Address" was far different than the "Reykjavik Address." Where Reagan expressed frustration with Gorbachev in the "Reykjavik Address," particularly with the Soviet leader's shortsightedness on the good a reciprocal relationship engendered, in the "Farewell Address," the President praised the reciprocal nature of US-Soviet relations. Reagan's call for deliberation and exchange had resulted in a relationship of reciprocity, and it had borne fruit. Reagan abandoned claims that his policies were transcendent. Instead, he concentrated on what reciprocity accomplished on an earthly level, particularly in regard to the way it shaped change in the Soviet Union. The President noted that on a visit to Russia he saw a joyful change in the countenance of the Soviet citizens.[427] The Soviets had relaxed their social policies, allowing their citizens more freedom, and the Russians earned some measure of praise and trust from the West. Reagan called the enactment of his domestic and foreign policies a "great movement," saying, "We meant to change a nation, and instead, we changed a world." The President's statement appears to be a statement about the US and the world, but it is not. Ostensibly, the US was the subject, but in light of Reagan's second-term Soviet rhetoric and his fondness for Gorbachev and the General Secretary's reforms, Russia became the country America tried to change, and in the process, the US changed the world.[428] In his second term, Reagan had argued that reciprocity would ensure a

[427] Ibid.
[428] Ibid.

level of trust and surety absent in previous US-Soviet relations, and by the end of his presidency, it appeared he was correct. Reciprocity, once hard come by, had become a defining feature of US-Soviet relations.

By the time Reagan gave his "London Address," the US and the Soviet Union had enjoyed a number of mutual victories, including arms control agreements. Reagan effusively praised the Soviet Union, especially Gorbachev. The "London Address" was a breakthrough moment in the Soviet redemption story. The Soviets were characterized as moving in the right direction, and with the help of the US foreign policy, they were well on their way to finding redemption. Reagan's "London Address" praised the Soviets for being on the road to redemption; his "Farewell Address" had the Soviets arrive as close as they could to redemption during Reagan's presidency. Reagan saw the change in the Soviet Union as something momentous and worthy of acknowledgment. "Nothing is less free than pure communism," said Reagan, "yet we have, the past few years, forged a satisfying new closeness with the Soviet Union. I've been asked if this isn't a gamble, and my answer is no because we're basing our actions not on words but deeds." The Soviets gained trust through actions because their leader engendered such trust. Gorbachev stood as a synecdoche for the new Soviet Union. He was trustworthy where previous leaders were not; he was a reformer; and he "knew things were wrong with his society and [was] trying to fix them." Gorbachev's influence was seen in all facets of Soviet social and political life. The Soviets were keeping their promises, unlike during détente of the 1970s. Reagan saw the results of Soviet change in his last visit to Moscow, recalling the happiness of the Soviet citizens and how he "could almost feel the possibilities in all that joy." How different Reagan's characterization of Russian citizens was in his "Farewell

Address" than in his first-term Soviet rhetoric where they were presented as downtrodden, oppressed people longing to flee Russian borders.[429]

Reagan's "Farewell Address" did not focus on the Soviets, but that he spent time praising the new look Soviet Union was significant. The change in the Soviet narrative was an important part of Reagan's legacy, and its inclusion in the "Farewell Address" demonstrated that Reagan thought that as well. The address was widely praised as a "virtuoso performance" for its "evocative language," imagery, and "relaxed tone."[430] Just as in his "London Address," critics noted the overwhelmingly positive tone of the address, both for the future of America and US-Soviet relations.[431] Reagan's final job approval poll found him at 60%,[432] although I am dubious about the idea that his "Farewell Address" affected his numbers. Reagan's vision of America, said one critic, was of "fables and mythology, of symbols and patriotic dreams," and to Reagan, it was that vision that had helped the US overcome obstacles, including helping to forge a new, lasting friendship with the Soviet Union.[433]

With the "Farewell Address," Reagan narrated the final chapter of the Soviet redemption story. His second-term rhetoric had changed in a way few could have foreseen. Reagan's previous Soviet rhetoric did not allow for the kind of relationship that developed between the US and the Soviet Union. It seemed the Soviets would always be irredeemable villains, just as Reagan had always characterized them. However, with Gorbachev's ascension to power, willingness to reform, and the good relationship between the Soviet leader and Reagan, the Soviets changed their formerly insidious ways. Reagan's second-term rhetoric showed the ways

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[429] Ibid.
[430] Timothy J. McNulty, "Reagan to U.S.: Keep the Faith," *Chicago Tribune*, January 12, 1989.
[431] Gerald F. Seib and Michel McQueen, "Reagan Bids Farewell from Presidential Stage in Personal Speech Reflecting Unfailing Optimism," *Wall Street Journal*, January 12, 1989.
[432] Gerhard Peters, "Presidential Job Approval: Ronald Reagan," *The American Presidency Project*, accessed November 3, 2016, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/data/popularity.php?pres=40.
[433] Haynes Johnson, "Reagan's Hollywood America," *The Washington Post*, January 13, 1989.

in which the Soviet Union transformed itself, and it became—perhaps not a protagonist—a redeemed character in Reagan's Soviet redemption narrative.

Chapter Five

Reagan did not narrate the epilogue of his Soviet redemption narrative; Mikhail Gorbachev did. His reforms paved the way for the fall of Soviet communism. In November, 1989, less than a year after Reagan left office, "thousands of jubilant Germans brought down the most visible symbol of division at the heart of Europe—the Berlin Wall."[434] The event was a watershed moment, and it seemed to signal the end of the Cold War. Indeed, later that year, "starting in Poland and spreading quickly throughout Central and Eastern Europe, European communism imploded."[435] Nearly every Soviet satellite state abandoned communism over the next two years, and on December 25, 1991, "the Soviet hammer and sickle flag lowered for the last time over the Kremlin," signaling the end of the Soviet Union.[436] Considering Reagan's assertions that the Soviet Union was at odds with God, it was appropriate that the close of the President's Soviet redemption story occurred on Christmas Day. In his first term, Reagan regarded "the reform or collapse of the communist system within the Soviet Union and its satellites" as "the only real long-term solution to key security problems."[437]

In this dissertation, I argue that narrative functioned as a mode of persuasion and historical restructuring in Reagan's Soviet discourse. Over the course of eight speeches and two presidential terms, I show that through rhetorical strategies, Reagan constructed a Soviet redemption narrative. Reagan's pre-presidential rhetoric was the foundation of the narrative. Reagan's story began during his Hollywood days when he spoke out against communism and

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[434] "Fall of Communism in Eastern Europe, 1989," *Office of the Historian,* accessed July 16, 2016, https://history.state.gov/milestones/1989-1992/fall-of-communism.
[435] Martin Krygier, "The Fall of European Communism: 20 Years After," *Hague Journal Of The Rule Of Law* 1, no. 2 (2009): 195. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCO*host* (accessed July 19, 2016).
[436] "The Collapse of the Soviet Union," *Office of the Historian*, https://history.state.gov/milestones/1989-1992/collapse-soviet-union
[437] William D. Anderson and Sterling J. Kerneck, "How 'Realistic' is Reagan's Diplomacy?" *Political Science Quarterly* 100 (1985): 405.

cautioned Americans about the expansionist goals of the Soviet Union. During his time as the Governor of California, Reagan continued speaking about the dangers of Soviet communism. After his election to the presidency in 1980, Reagan's Soviet rhetoric seemed as vitriolic as ever. During Reagan's second term, however, he began talking about the Soviets in a more conciliatory manner. In large part, Gorbachev's desire for Soviet reforms, and the relationship the Soviet leader and Reagan built, facilitated the President's rhetorical shift. In short, this dissertation reveals the rhetorical strategies Reagan used to negotiate his changing Soviet rhetoric and the way that rhetoric created a Soviet redemption narrative.

The Narrative

Reagan's Soviet redemption story generally followed the traditional three-act narrative structure: setup, conflict, and resolution. The acts were not clearly delineated. Rather, each bled into the other. As is common in the setup, Reagan's narrative introduced the main characters of the story (the United States and the Soviet Union), a problem or incident of consequence (ideological conflict/the Soviet menace), and the general state of the world in which the characters live (a radically changed, post-World War II, world). In a traditional narrative structure, the conflict involves great change in the characters' world that is brought on by the problem, as well as the ways in which the characters navigate those changes. The conflict in Reagan's narrative centered on the Cold War clash between the US and the USSR and how the superpowers engaged each other in a rapidly changing political climate. The resolution is the third act in a narrative structure. It is marked by the moment of highest tension in the story; the characters are forced to confront the problem introduced in the setup, which leads to the problem's resolution. The Soviet redemption narrative's resolution occurred in the President's second term when Gorbachev ascended to power, Reagan's Soviet rhetoric changed, and the

USSR started the process of reform. What follows is a brief review of the Soviet redemption narrative's setup, conflict, and resolution. I demonstrate the ebb and flow of the narrative's plot, how each act played out in Reagan's rhetoric, and the manner in which each act influenced the other to create the Soviet redemption narrative.

The Setup and the Conflict

It is customary to find a fairly clear delineation between the acts of a narrative. Reagan's Soviet redemption narrative was different. The setup and the conflict were inextricable from one another. Reagan's pre-presidential Soviet rhetoric, and his first-term presidential rhetoric, served much the same purpose: it defined the characteristics of the main characters, emphasized the differences in American and Russian ideologies, and stressed the danger of a Soviet Union left unchecked. That is not to say that the different eras of Reagan's rhetoric were equal in power. His presidential rhetoric had a higher level of authority and consequence and thus was more significant to the narrative.

Unlike a story in which the narrator creates characters and conflicts from whole cloth, elements of the setup were established far before Reagan began his tale. The acrimonious relationship between the Americans and the Soviets began in earnest after the October Revolution in 1917 in which the communist Bolsheviks gained control of Russia.[438] Just as during the Cold War, the tenets of communism in the early 20th century were antithetical to American democracy. Communism was "not only a threat to America's interest in a stable global order, but also a menace to American domestic unity and a challenge" to American values.[439] Thus, the US and the Soviet Union maintained a discordant relationship for many years before World War II. After a brief alliance during the Second World War, the US and the USSR

[438] David S. Foglesong, *America's Secret War Against Bolshevism: U.S. Intervention in the Russian War 1917-1920* (Chapel Hill, NC: North Carolina University Press, 1995), 43-45.
[439] Ibid., 5.

returned to unfriendly terms. In 1949, there was a "first turning point," or a moment that "ensures that life will never be the same for the main character[s]"[440]: the Soviets successfully tested an atomic bomb. From that moment, the US and the USSR would have to negotiate a rancorous relationship without one pushing the other to unleash a nuclear end-of-days.

Although the characters and the conflict were created before Reagan began his speaking career, his pre-presidential Soviet rhetoric was instrumental in fashioning the setup up for his redemption narrative. Reagan was concerned with the political, social, and ideological conflict between the US and the USSR and with the idea of encroaching communist influence across the globe, especially in the United States. Given the USSR's expansionist sensibilities, history of oppression, and disdain for democracy, Reagan readily decried the Soviets' character and their threat to the world stability. He professed the immoral and aggressive aspects of Soviet existence, while lauding the benevolent character of the United States.

Reagan used the rhetorical strategies of *ethos*, prophetic dualism, and analogy to convince his audiences, whether in his testimony to the HUAC, or in his gubernatorial oratory, of the United States' moral superiority and goodness compared to the Soviet Union's. The US was charged with vigilantly guarding against communist expansionism. Reagan's position on the dangers of communist encroachment was best exemplified in his "A Time for Choosing" speech. As Governor of California, Reagan toned down the frequency and vitriol of his anti-communist rhetoric in order to "appear less radical and extremist."[441] Still, his narrative characterized the Soviet Union as the premier evil in the world, and the US as the greatest good. After he left the governor's mansion, Reagan hosted a daily radio program that ran from 1975-1979, and his

[440] Cole Nussbaumer Knaflic, *Storytelling with Data* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley & Sons, 2015), 167.
[441] Mary Stuckey, *Getting Into the Game: The Pre-Presidential Rhetoric of Ronald Reagan* (New York: Praeger, 1989), 33.

"staunch opposition to Communism [was] apparent in many commentaries."[442] His pre-presidential rhetoric told the story of a Soviet Union bent on spreading communism through direct intervention in unstable countries, or through covert infiltration in stable democracies.

Reagan was unrelenting on that point, and as he entered the first term of his presidency, his anti-communist rhetoric raised concerns about whether he had the temperament to engage the Soviets without sparking some kind of military conflict. His critics were right to worry, for Reagan continued his brand of pointed anti-communism. Reagan concretized his narrative of the Soviets as harbingers of doom through historical narrative, observations about the social, political, and moral character of the US, the Soviets, and their allies that emerged from the historical narrative, and assertions about what the West must do to achieve victory over Soviet communism. In his pre-presidential Soviet narrative, the USSR was clearly the primary antagonist in the world. During the first term of his presidency, the Soviet Union became more than an expansionist villain. It was an evil empire slouching toward its doom but still dangerous, untrustworthy, and immoral. The historical narrative showed that the Soviet Union was, and had always been, irredeemable.

Reagan's pre-presidential, and first-term presidential, rhetoric created an antagonist of historic proportions. The Soviet Union sought world domination, and it would use deceit, violence, and oppression to secure its rule. Reagan's protagonist, the US, was charged with defending the world from communist encroachment. Their antithetical ideologies kept the US and the USSR in a constant struggle for global influence. Reagan's narrative undermined the Soviet Union while elevating the United States. In short, it seemed the two countries would forever be in conflict.

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[442] Joe Foote and Kevin Curran, "Ronald Reagan Radio Broadcasts (1976-1979)," *Library of Congress*, accessed July 19, 2016, https://www.loc.gov/programs/static/nationalrecordingpreservationboard/documents/ReaganOnRadio.pdf

The Resolution

The resolution of Reagan's Soviet redemption narrative came during his second presidential term. A narrative's resolution houses the moment when tension is at its peak, and for Reagan's narrative, that moment was when Gorbachev became the Soviet leader. Clearly, there were other moments in the Cold War that one might point to as the moment of highest tension. For example, the Cuban Missile Crisis took the US and the Soviet Union to the brink of war. However, in Reagan's narrative, Gorbachev's rise to power coincided with a US-Soviet relationship that had recently been at its most divisive. Equally as important, Gorbachev signified a moment when the course of US-Soviet relations had the chance to change. The narrative found itself in a place of high anxiety, because the decades-long problem of US-Soviet conflict had reached a turning point.

Unfortunately, Reagan could not simply change his Soviet rhetoric so that it was friendly and open toward the communists. Reagan's Soviet rhetoric was consistent for decades, and his antecedent anti-communist rhetoric was a part of his political identity. He had made it clear that the superpowers' social and political ideologies were in such conflict that the US and the USSR could do no more than coexist, and even that was a dubious arrangement. If Reagan radically changed the character of the Soviet Union in the middle of his narrative, he ran the risk of having his authenticity and veracity challenged.

Indeed, Reagan's rhetorical shift created dissention among conservatives. James Mann notes that during the President's "final three years as president, frustrated conservatives regularly" claimed that Reagan "had become the tool of a cabal of 'moderates' inside his administration"; these moderates kept Reagan from being his true self.[443] They called for the President's administration to "'Let Reagan be Reagan.'" Conservatives decried Reagan's new

[443] Mann, *The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan,* 344.

Soviet rhetoric. Archconservative William F. Buckley argued that "to greet [the Soviet Union] as if it were no longer evil is on the order of changing our entire position toward Adolf Hitler."[444] George Will said Reagan was "wrong…about what is happening in Moscow." Will claimed that the President "has accelerated the moral disarmament of the West—actual disarmament will follow—by elevating wishful thinking to the status of political philosophy."[445] F. Andy Messing Jr., executive director of the conservative National Defense Council Foundation, concluded that the President "abandoned the conservative agenda he brought to office" and was not "the Ronald Reagan of 1980."[446] Despite conservative protestations, Reagan "overcame the resistance of the political right, effectively marginalizing it."[447]

To take advantage of the new political climate, Reagan had to find a way to negotiate a change in his Soviet rhetoric. The President did so by employing three recurring strategies: historical narrative, arguments of reciprocity, and synecdoche. Reagan used historical narrative throughout his speaking career. Previously, he employed historical narrative as a way to establish the Soviet history of deception. In his second term, Reagan used it as a means of comparison to exhibit positive Soviet change and to emphasize the importance of demonstrable acts of reciprocity between the Americans and the Soviets. Regrettably for Reagan, the Soviets' long history of dishonesty, oppression, and expansionism left little in the way of trust. Luckily, Gorbachev represented a new way of Soviet thinking, and the President found the Soviet leader an excellent synecdoche for the whole of the USSR. If Reagan could work with Gorbachev to form a new relationship, then the US could build a new relationship with the Soviet Union.

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[444] William F. Buckley Jr., "A Russian Fairy Tale…." *The Washington Post*, June 7, 1988.
[445] George Will, "How Reagan Changed America," *Newsweek*, January 9, 1989.
[446] Edward Walsh, "Conservatives Praise President for Advocacy of Rights, Democracy," *The Washington Post*, June 6, 1988, accessed May 6, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1988/06/02/conservatives-praise-president-for-advocacy-of-rights-democracy/1f74a844-b15a-4563-be25-a26fb037d427/.
[447] Mann, 344.

The resolution of Reagan's Soviet redemption narrative might best be described as a narrative of summits. The President's post-summit addresses revealed the progress of the Soviet narrative. After the Geneva summit, Reagan struck a softer, more conciliatory tone than he had before when talking about the Soviets. The US could work with the USSR, and although Reagan was cautiously optimistic, the "Geneva Address" placed the Soviets on a narrative path to some form of redemption unimaginable in the President's previous rhetoric. Reagan's optimism did not last long, and after the Reykjavik summit, he presented his audience with a story of Soviet backsliding; the Soviets had fallen back into their previous role of antagonist. It appeared that Reagan's Soviet narrative would continue as before. Yet two years later, speaking after the Moscow summit, Reagan characterized the Soviets in relatively glowing terms. Gorbachev had pushed reforms in the Soviet Union, and it had experienced a sea change in terms of social and political actions. In his "Farewell Address," Reagan reiterated his approval of the changes happening in the Soviet Union. At the end of Reagan's presidency, the Soviets were no longer the antagonists of the President's narrative, but a character earnestly endeavoring toward redemption.

In its simplest form, the arc of Reagan's Soviet redemption narrative unfolded like this: During the Cold War, the Soviets were an aggressive, deceitful lot, determined to expand their influence across the globe. They attempted to do so through threats of violence, wars, proxy wars, and immoral actions. The US opposed the USSR, serving as a benevolent shield against communist encroachment. Nonetheless, the Soviets used treachery, dishonesty, and viciousness to gain footholds in countries throughout the world. They menaced the world as irredeemable despots whose system of government was antithetical to American democracy. There was no hope for peace as long as the Soviet Union existed, and as the historical record showed, the

Soviets could not be trusted to pursue peace, even if they espoused a desire for such. The Soviets seemed destined to remain the world's antagonist, but through Mikhail Gorbachev, they began to change.

Their path to redemption was not straight, and occasionally, they fell back on their old ways. Still, the Soviets persisted, and they eventually reformed themselves. In what I earlier called the epilogue, the Soviet Union voluntarily ended its existence. The USSR's end signaled the Soviet redemption narrative's close. The conclusion of Reagan's narrative served to emphasize how much the Soviets had changed. In Reagan's decades-long narrative, the world saw the Soviet Union as a fierce threat to its safety; the Soviets were willing to engage in all manner of violence and trickery to remain relevant and gain power. One expected something akin to a Dylan Thomas poem—the Soviets would "not go gentle into that good night,"[448] but there was no raging in the end. The Soviet Union, which ran "against the tide of history,"[449] was consumed by that tide like a sandcastle in the dying light of the day.

Conclusions

Studying a speaker's development of one issue over the span of a public speaking career yields perspectives previously unknown, unexplored, or ignored. We gain new perspectives on a speaker's political, social, or personal words, deeds, and beliefs through the temporal aspect of their orations often hidden in the study of a single speech, or of a few over a brief span of time. We can analyze one speech and point to the rhetorical devices, kairotic import of the moment, and the influence of historical events in the oration, but such analysis does not allow us an inclusive understanding of the speech as part of a greater body of work.

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[448] Dylan Thomas, "Do Not Go Gentle into that Good Night," Poets.org, accessed July 24, 2016. https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/do-not-go-gentle-good-nighthttps://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/do-not-go-gentle-good-night.

[449] Ronald Reagan, "Address to Members of the British Parliament," (speech, Washington, DC, June 8, 1982), *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=42614.

In Reagan's case, two important new perspectives emerge from the study of his deployment of the Soviet narrative over the course of his speaking career. First, critics often note the consistency of Reagan's messages throughout his career. As Robert Rowland writes, "Reagan speeches from the end of his presidency sound very much like Reagan speeches from the Goldwater campaign."[450] Such consistency was particularly true of Reagan's anti-Soviet messages until his second term. Reagan's shifting Soviet rhetoric reveals that he was not as dogmatic in his rhetorical approach as many would claim. His Soviet rhetoric, then, was more than the repetition of the same message over the course of his career. Instead, Reagan's Soviet rhetoric reveals the dynamic process of rhetoric in response to new purposes, situations, and political actors. For Reagan scholars, contrary to the popular image of him as an "empty suit"[451] bumbling through the political process, the President's shifting rhetoric offers evidence that he understood and used the nuance and power of rhetoric to achieve political goals.

The second new perspective we gain from studying the Soviet redemption narrative is the clout of a unified message, especially from a President, to change the way an audience perceives a former political rival. Reagan's Soviet narrative demonstrates how a speaker fashions the new out of the old. We see how changing the way one speaks of a political adversary can help to mend decades-old social and political rivalries. Changing the narrative hurt Reagan's standing with some hardline conservatives, but it enhanced his standing with liberals who were "delighted and surprised"[452] by his conciliatory language. In any case, conservatives gnashing their teeth, or liberals nodding their heads in approval, mattered little to the outcome of Reagan's narrative.

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[450] Robert Roland, "Principle, Pragmatism, and Authenticity in Reagan's Rhetoric," Paper presented at the Ronald Reagan Centennial Symposium, University of Southern California Sol Price School of Public Policy on February 2, 2011: 3. http://priceschool.usc.edu/files/documents/events/Rowland__Principle_Pragmatism_and_Authenticity_in_Reagans_Rhetoric.pdf Accessed August 18, 2016.

[451] Ibid., 39.

[452] Ibid., 36.

Through his narrative, Reagan constituted the Soviet Union as redeemed, and in doing so, changed the way his American audience perceived the Russians. In large part, Reagan was successful at changing perceptions because he did not betray his political beliefs while navigating the transformation of US-Soviet relations. In short, Reagan was principled and pragmatic[453] as he told the Soviet redemption narrative.

Reagan's Soviet redemption narrative deserves attention for a number of reasons. First, it is a powerful example of how presidential rhetoric facilitates national and international political change. In his first term, Reagan's rhetoric reinforced the historical narrative that positioned the Soviets as the ultimate evil in the world and America as its enduring foe. Yet, despite that position, the Soviet Union of his second term became an example of redemptive change. Through both conciliatory and provocative rhetoric, in conjunction with Gorbachev's desire for reform, Reagan helped facilitate a change in perceptions of the Soviet Union, and he expedited its abandonment of communism.

Second, for Reagan scholars, the narrative helps us understand how the President negotiated his changing Soviet rhetoric in light of his antecedent rhetoric. He never abandoned anti-communist rhetoric; Reagan employed it strategically, using it less as the Soviets moved away from hardline communist policies. As I have noted, many critics of Reagan's changing Soviet rhetoric found it, at best, hypocritical, and, at worst, tantamount to embracing Hitler. However, viewed as part of a larger narrative, the President's rhetoric appears to move between that which was necessary in the past to maintain the global status quo and that which was necessary to advance global progress.

Third, the Soviet redemption narrative is a unique case of political rhetorical response and change. Rarely does a politician, whose political persona is rooted in one unflinching,

[453] Ibid., 43.

enduring crusade, shift their rhetoric and message in such a relatively quick and substantial way. In Reagan's case, his changing rhetoric was a response to a kairotic moment of great historical significance.

Fourth, Reagan's narrative reveals the power of rhetoric in action and shows us how rhetoric can mend political rifts, creating new relationships out of old. Since before World War I, the US and the Soviet Union maintained an acrimonious relationship that grew increasingly strained through Reagan's first term. Decades of social, political, and ideological struggle seemed to have solidified a permanent state of conflict between the superpowers. Yet, through rhetorical and political moves, Reagan loosened that concretized animosity, allowing the US and the Soviet Union the freedom to move toward a friendly partnership.

Last, the Soviet redemption narrative challenges us to find the cohesive message or story across an orator's catalogue. In doing so, we might better understand any number of their overarching stances or arguments. As well, we may find that long held beliefs about an orator's overall rhetoric or motivation need revision. So it was with Reagan's Soviet narrative. There is a perception that Reagan's anti-communism was without nuance, and that, while a skilled orator, he was somewhat politically inept. However, Reagan's changing Soviet rhetoric and its accompanying redemption narrative, revealed a man who understood when, and in what contexts, to alter his rhetoric to suit his political goals.

There is room to expand this study. I chose eight speeches as exemplars of how the Soviet redemption narrative evolved over time, but one could critique a greater number of speeches in order to produce a more nuanced reading of the narrative. Charting Reagan's changing Soviet rhetoric, and studying the redemptive path of the Soviets, could also reveal what, if any, influence Reagan had in the collapse of the Soviet Union. I did not address the

contentious issue of whether Reagan ended the Cold War, but by studying Reagan's Soviet rhetoric in conjunction with moments of Soviet action, inaction, or change, one may find stronger or weaker evidence of Reagan's hand in ending the Cold War.

When I began this dissertation, I expected to find a linear narrative. Instead, I found a narrative whose acts were not clearly demarcated, and whose temporal aspects helped me to understand the place of past actions on an orator's current rhetoric. Reagan was a divisive personality; people applauded and derided his nationalistic rhetoric, his virulent anti-communist oratory, and his saccharine view of American democracy. I applaud Reagan, because although he was far from a perfect president, he held fast to his convictions because he believed he was doing what was best for America. For Reagan, part of doing good for the country was to push a narrative that said the Soviet Union was a menace to the safety and sanctity of the US and its allies. However, part of doing what was best for America was also recognizing when the narrative could change and taking advantage of the moment. What emerged from this study was an understanding of how Reagan's Soviet redemption narrative not only told the story of the Soviet antagonist redeeming itself, but how that redemption narrative mirrored the moments when Reagan acted to further the good of America.

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